From Antioch to Babylon

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The First Two Centuries of Christianity in the Near East

Jon Davies

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For my wife,
whose support is unflagging

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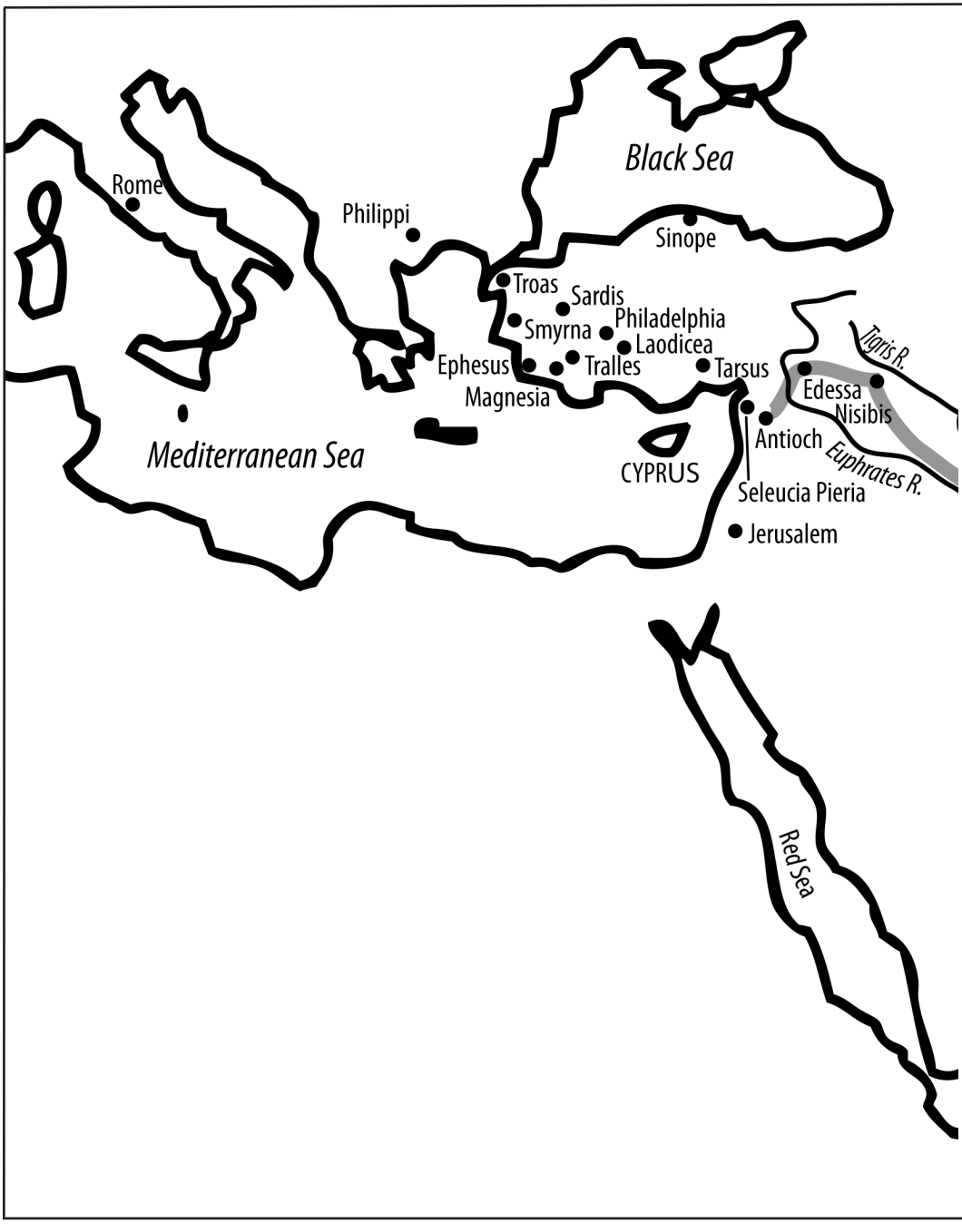
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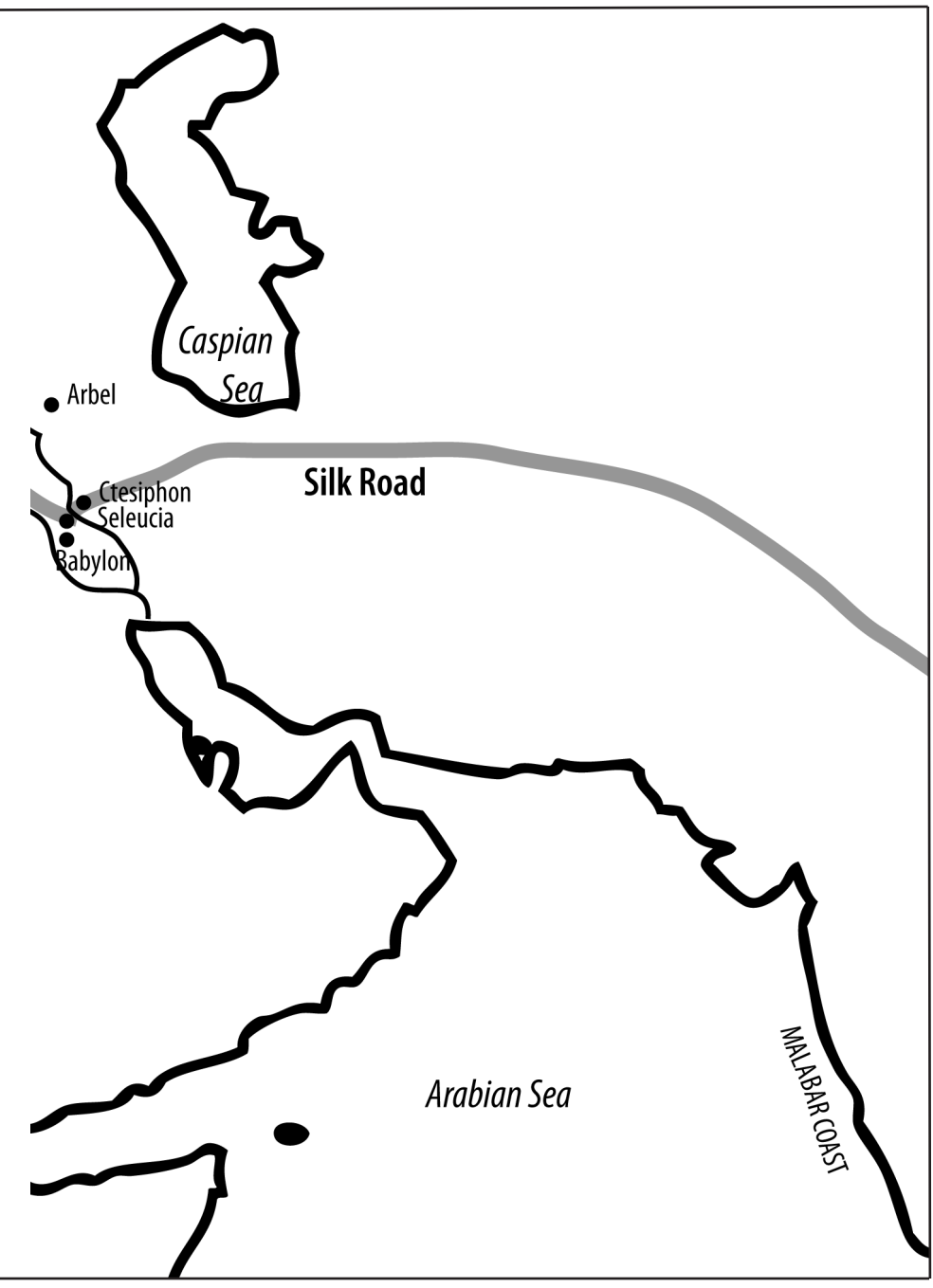
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From Antioch to Babylon

Introduction

Raymond E. Brown and John P. Meier's popular book *Antioch and Rome* seats Antioch contextually within the Roman Empire.[1] This tendency is not uncommon. And it is for good reason. Antioch was, after all, during the early development of Christianity, part of that empire. And when we read the history of the early church, it is largely the history of the church to the west. Even our New Testament scriptures go not to the east and south but to the north and west—to Greece, Asia Minor, and finally to Rome. What documents survive from the second century are also largely Western in purview. Writers such as Polycarp and Justin Martyr come from these regions, not from those to Jerusalem's east, and when documents that are preserved do turn south, near the end of the second century, with writers such as Origen and Tertullian, it is to Egypt and Africa, to regions still within the purview of Roman power, not to those outside it.

This book attempts to do something different than Brown and Meier's work. It aims to focus on Antioch within the purview of the church as it developed to the east, in an empire that contended with Rome during this time: Parthia.

This book also aims to do something different with regard to timeline, expanding it somewhat to look beyond

1. Raymond E. Brown and John P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983).

the first century to all of the second century. Most histories of the religion of the area cut off at the start of the second century, with the letters of the Antiochene bishop Ignatius, as do Brown and Meier. The first century in Antioch is a particularly popular subject, covered in such works as those by Magnus Zetterholm, who looks at the social context of the time; Michelle Slee, who reviews the history of the Eucharist during these years; Jerome Crow, who studies Antioch as a missionary field of Jerusalem; or Nicholas Taylor, who studies the city in the context of Paul's mission and the emerging church governmental structure.[2] After the first century, and especially after Ignatius's martyrdom near the start of the second, books about Antiochene Christianity tend to skip into the third or later, where early sources begin to proliferate. Such is the case with Wayne A. Meeks and Robert L. Wilken's *Jews and Christians in Antioch in the First Four Centuries of the Common Era* and Isabella Sandwell's *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity*, both of which focus primarily on the fourth-century writings of Libanius and John Chrysostom.[3] Similarly, D. S. Wallace-Hadrill's book *Christian Antioch* picks

2. Magnus Zetterholm, *The Formation of Christianity in Antioch: A Social-Scientific Approach to the Separation between Judaism and Christianity* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Michelle Slee, *The Church in Antioch in the First Century CE: Communion and Conflict* (New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003); Jerome Crowe, *From Jerusalem to Antioch: The Gospel across Cultures* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1997); Nicholas Taylor, *Paul, Antioch, and Jerusalem: A Study in Relationships and Authority in Earliest Christianity* (Sheffield: Journal of the Study of the New Testament Press, 1992).

3. Wayne A. Meeks and Robert L. Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch in the First Four Centuries of the Common Era* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1978); Isabella Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity: Greeks, Jews, and Christians in Antioch* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

up largely in the third century.[4] Still others focus primarily on just one person or one theological subject rather than on the period as a whole. There are good reasons for this. Our knowledge of Christianity as it developed after the close of the New Testament and into the second century is in many ways confusing, the writings that survive from the time fewer than we would wish for. "The second was a century," Walter H. Wagner puts it in his survey of Christianity during the era, "in which traditions and expectations were becoming unhinged, but new combinations had not gained wide or even authoritative acceptance."[5] How are we to describe the faith in these years? Who speaks for it? Or were there many who spoke for it, an array of Christianities that were competing for dominance, from which one would emerge as the orthodox, the one, the true?

Many books on early Christianity end with Constantine's adoption of the faith in the early fourth century, given that the Roman government's imposition of its will onto the church would shape its history and identity thereafter, but this book ends roughly with the close of the second century and the start of the third. By that time, the Roman church's ascendance to the head of what would become the mainstream faith's governmental structure is already evident in the Roman pontiff Victor's attempt to excommunicate the churches of Asia Minor who refused to bend to his will on the matter of Easter versus Passover.[6] In other words, the

4. D. S. Wallace-Hadrill, *Christian Antioch: A Study of Early Christian Thought in the East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

5. Walter H. Wagner, *After the Apostles: Christianity in the Second Century* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), viii.

6. Eusebius, *Church History*, 5.23–24. For more on the subject from a Catholic perspective, see Herbert Thurston, "Easter Controversy," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 5 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909), http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05228a.htm; from

shape that the church, at least in the West, would take was already becoming well evident. Such was also roughly the time that the Parthian kingdom would fall, and the church in the East would begin a period in which its interaction with the secular government would differ significantly from what came before.

Here, too, however, our understanding of the events taking place within the Christian faith as it would emerge to the east of Jerusalem is scanty—and the history is often ignored. There are good reasons for this. Once again we suffer from a lack of early source material, with the most prominent early writers, such as Aphrahat and Ephrem, being from as late as the third and fourth centuries. Earlier writers, such as Marcion and Tatian, by contrast, have come to be considered heretical. Beyond that, Christianity, as it has developed over the millennia since, has disappeared to a large degree in the East, leaving us with the impression that it had less of an impact on the region and resigning us to fewer resources on which to draw. The latter is evident even in the much shorter length of the second part of this book.

Such difficulties with regard to accessible material, in turn, mean that this work, too, tells a tale more of two communities side by side than it does one of coherent development of the church's mission as it moved west to east. Nevertheless, the stories are presented in parallel in the hope of finding mutual concerns and influences, even if communication between the two regions is not always clear. To be sure, the two communities likely did see a significant degree of interaction. The so-called Silk Road,

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a Jewish Christian perspective, see Kelly McDonald Jr., *The Quartodeciman Controversy* (Stevens Point, Wis.: Bible Sabbath Association, 2022), https://sabbathsentinel.files.wordpress.com/2023/07/quartodeciman-controversy-august-2022.pdf. Both works contain an ample list of other sources on the subject.

which would have ended in the port of Seleucia Pieria just to Antioch's west, connected the city to the regions to its east, making Antioch not only an important trading link between Parthia and Rome but also an important center for cultural interaction, one for which Jewish traders in particular were known for taking advantage.[7]

In the East, I attempt to focus primarily on Babylon—or rather on the Mesopotamian region around Babylon—but the fact that most of our later records of the Eastern church stem from much farther north or from the southeast, in India, means that there is again a dearth of information. Indeed, the degree to which Babylon was even a viable city at the time is disputed. While Antioch was rich and vibrant, Babylon had long seen its heyday wain. For this reason, it is easy to see why scholars tend to look west rather than east, and why when they do look east, they tend primarily to look toward a city like Edessa in northeastern Syria, which came under Roman control by the end of the second century and thus within the Western historiographical record. Indeed, both Edessa and Antioch play prime roles within the history of Syriac Christianity, which I draw on to flesh out the events in the church in the East during this time. Another factor that makes tracing Christianity in the East more difficult is the fact that Eastern Christianity likely kept its Jewish tinge for longer. In this way, it failed to emerge as a separate faith quite as notably as

7. Jacob Neusner, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia*, vol. 1: *The Parthian Period* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), 88; Jacob Neusner, "Babylonia," *Jewish Encyclopedia*, https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/babylonia; T. V. Philip, *East of the Euphrates: Early Christianity in Asia* (India: CSS and ISPCK, 1998), chapter 3, Religion Online, https://www.religion-online.org/book-chapter/chapter-3-christianity-in-persia/, and chapter 4, https://www.religion-online.org/book-chapter/chapteri-i4-christianity-in-arabia-and-central-asia-christianity-among-the-arabs/; David G. K. Taylor, "The Coming of Christianity to Mesopotamia," chap. 4 in *The Syriac World*, ed. Daniel King (New York: Routledge, 2019), 82.

that farther to the west. Indeed, the church in Antioch itself demonstrates the degree to which Jewish heritage was maintained for longer that it was in Rome. Further to our lack of information is the absence of a Constantine of the East, which means that Christianity in the East never quite emerged as the political and cultural influence that it did in the West, the number of adherents in the first centuries notwithstanding. Nevertheless, an appreciation of how a cultural center such as Antioch could influence areas not just to the west but also to the east, I hope, can give us a much greater appreciation for the development of Christianity in its early days, as it aimed to distinguish itself from the Jewish faith then emerging but also to withstand the influences of Eastern philosophies and religions.

Antioch

Roman Emperors, 27 BCE to 211 CE

Augustus	27 BCE–14 CE
Tiberius	14–37
Caligula	37–41
Claudius	41–54
Nero	54-68
Three Short-Lived Emperors	68–69
Vespasian	69-79
Titus	79–81
Domitian	81–96
Nerva	96–98
Trajan	98–117
Hadrian	117–138
Antoninus Pius	138–161
Marcus Aurelius	161–180
Lucius Verus (joint with Marcus Aurelius)	161–169
Commodus	180–192
Four Short-Lived Emperors	193
Septimus Severus	193–211

The Primacy of Peter?

Forget Jerusalem. What has come to be called Christianity first began in Antioch—indeed, the very word *Christian* first came into being in the city (Acts 11:26). Here, the Christian faith made its break from that of the Jewish people.[1] Peter, the traditional first Roman pontiff, was bishop—that is, the head elder—originally in this provincial Roman capital. From Antioch, the new religion spread to the west and east, with Peter at its head. Or so goes the tradition.[2]

If we examine the biblical narrative, however, Peter's role as the first head of the nascent church in this location seems much less historically certain. Sure, Jesus may have told Peter that "upon this rock I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18), a statement subject to multiple interpretations and, as such, a dubious one around which to build a historical narrative, but Peter's interaction with the Antiochenes in the New Testament is limited to a one-time event recounted in Galatians 2—and it is not one that seems to demonstrate the supremacy of Peter's authority at that.[3]

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1. Jerome Crowe, *From Jerusalem to Antioch: The Gospel across Cultures* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1997), 150, 155.

2. For examples of this common claim see "The Patriarchate of Antioch: Founded by Saints Peter and Paul," Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, 2020, http://ww1.antiochian.org/patofant; Philip Kosloski, "How St. Peter First Became a Bishop in Antioch, Not Rome," *Aleteia*, February 22, 2018, https://aleteia.org/2018/02/22/how-st-peter-first-became-a-bishop-in-antioch-not-rome/; Taylor Marshall, "Was Saint Peter in Rome or Antioch? The Chronology of Peter's Papacy," Taylor's Marshall's blog *Pray the Rosary Daily*, January 20, 2012, https://taylormarshall.com/2012/01/was-saint-peter-in-rome-or-antioch.html; John Chapman, "Evodius," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 5 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909), http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05653a.htm.

3. All biblical quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise noted. Various interpretations of Matthew 16:18 can be found at the commentaries available about the verse at Bible Hub, https://biblehub.com/commentaries/matthew/16-18.htm. As the com-

Rather, if the New Testament accounts were to be referenced alone, a more logical first bishop would be Barnabas or Paul or one of the many other "prophets and teachers" known to have worked in the area from early on (Acts 13:1). It was, after all, Barnabas whom the Jerusalem church first sent to Antioch after a set of believers was established among the non-Jewish sectors of the population (Acts 11:22). It was Paul, Barnabas, Judas/Barsabas, and Silas who were sent to Antioch to share the decision from the Jerusalem conference regarding the circumcision of non-Jewish believers (Acts 15:22). Biblical accounts make plain, however, that Paul, Barnabas, and Silas traveled widely, rarely staying in Antioch for more than a few years, and that Judas/Barsabas returned to reside in Jerusalem (Acts 15:33), suggesting that if there was a bishop of Antioch, it would likely have been one of the other teachers in the area within a few years after the church's founding.

The first mention of Peter as the bishop of Antioch, or at least as the founder of the Antioch church, does not appear until the end of the second century, in the writings

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mentaries make clear, a common Roman Catholic position uses the statement to justify the teaching that Peter was the church's first pope. See also "What Does Matthew 16:18 Mean?," Bible Reference, https://www.bibleref.com/Matthew/16/Matthew-16-18.html. Much ink has been spent exploring the implications of Galatians 2:11–14 with regard to the structure of the early church and the various factions within it. Many scholars, as discussed later, see it as standoff regarding the nature of proper relations between Jewish and non-Jewish believers as advocated by James, with whom Peter aligned, and Paul, a standoff that Paul, at least in the near term, lost. One thing important to remember about the passage, however, is that Peter at first ate with the non-Jewish believers before bowing to the demands of the brethren come from James. Thus, the event would seem to demonstrate not Peter's all-consuming authority within Antioch or the church as a whole but rather a kind of political gamesmanship or attempt to please various church factions. Peter, thus, becomes subservient to either James or Paul.

of Origen, where he identifies Ignatius, in his *Homilies on Luke*, as "the second bishop of Antioch after Peter."[4] Eusebius, writing a little more than a century later, would follow Origen's lead, noting also that Ignatius was "second in succession to Peter" in Antioch.[5] From there, the tradition became rather commonplace. Early mentions of Peter as the founder of the church at Antioch include instances in the *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* (fourth century) and in the writings of Jerome (late fourth–early fifth century) and John Malalas (sixth century).[6] Peter's ongoing importance, and indeed possible direct connection, to Antioch is also attested to by the ongoing popularity in the area of the various apocryphal writings attributed to him in the early church.[7] Lack of earlier reference to Peter as bishop of Antioch does not necessarily preclude the accuracy of

4. Origen, *Homilies on Luke*, trans. Joseph T. Lienhard (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press of America 1996), 6.4.

5. Eusebius, *Church History*, trans. Arthur Cushman McGiffert, 3.36.2, from *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, vol. 1, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Buffalo, N.Y.: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890), revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250103.htm.

6. Jerome, *On Illustrious Men*, chap. 1; John Malalas, *Chronography*, 10.242.10–22, 246.22; *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, 7.4.46. A useful online compendium of early references to Peter can be found at Markus Bockmuehl's *Simon Peter in Scripture and Memory* companion website, http://simonpeter.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/. Dating on *Constitutions* is from James Donaldson, "Introductory Notice to *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*," in *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, ed. James Donaldson, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 7: *Fathers of the Third and Fourth Centuries: Lactantius, Venantius, Asterius, Victorinus, Dionysisus, Apostolic Teaching and Constitutions, Homily and Liturgies*, ed. Philip Schaff (1885), Christian Ethereal Library, https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf07/anf07.ix.i.html; dating on Malalas's *Chronography* from Tessa Rajak, "The Mediterranean Jewish Diaspora in the Second Century," chapter 2 in *Christianity in the Second Century: Themes and Developments*, ed. James Carleton Paget and Judith Lieu (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 47.

7. William Steuart McBirnie, *The Search for the Twelve Apostles* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1972), 54.

the later accounts, given that we have so few early works on which to draw, arguably none of which specifically focus on Antioch's leadership organization. However, mentions of Peter as the founder or first bishop certainly fit any agenda later writers might have had in tying the apostle to later orthodoxy and its episcopal structure, a structure that may well not have even existed at the time that Peter was alive. By establishing Peter as the founder of the first church to make a significant break from its Jewish origins on its way to becoming a separate non-Jewish religion, later writers could justify whatever other arguments arose over proper doctrine and practice as originating with one of Jesus's twelve disciples, indeed, arguably, with the most important of those disciples—given the emphasis he receives in the Gospel accounts (more than 150 mentions of him in the New Testament, more than any other apostle)[8]—and, thus, with Jesus himself.

Geography and Culture of Antioch

Next to Rome and Alexandria, Antioch was the third-most important city in the Roman Empire, but with regard to trade, as the intersection between routes going west to Rome and east to the Parthian Empire and the Orient, as well as north into Europe and south into Egypt, it was arguably even more important.[9] From Syria and Palestine—

8. Paul R. Finch, *Beyond Acts: New Perspectives in New Testament History* (Palm Bay, Fla.: Sunrise Publications, 2003), 155–156.

9. Samuel Hugh Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia*, vol. 1: *Beginnings to 1500* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1998), 51; Crowe, *From Jerusalem to Antioch*, 77; Glanville Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria from Seleucus to the Arab Conquest* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961), 272; Wayne A. Meeks and Robert L. Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch in the First Four Centuries of the Common Era* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1978), 1; Raymond E. Brown and John P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 12; D. S. Wallace-

most especially from the "Old Silk Road" that ended in Antioch—the silk trade moved from points farther east on to Rome proper.[10] To the south of Antioch, furthermore, were the granaries of Palestine.[11] Directly to Antioch's west, less than a day's journey by foot, and connected by the Orontes River was the port of Seleucia Pieria, which made Antioch an important center not only for land travel but also for sea.[12]

Antioch's relative proximity, some three hundred miles north of the Jerusalem temple and the site of Jesus's birth and crucifixion, also made it a convenient center from which the Gospel could more easily spread to regions, and more especially cultures, far and wide. Jerusalem was a comparative backwater, "a highland city, with little water, poor soil, and dangerous roads," in an area "quite extraordinarily unfavorable for trade."[13] Although a center for the Jewish faith that attracted a constant stream of visitors, especially around the time of the annual festivals and whose pilgrimages to would have helped spread the message among the Jewish diaspora community, Jerusalem was oriented as a commercial sector almost entirely on its temple.[14] As such, Jerusalem as a destination would have spoken to those of the Jewish faith but to few beyond

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Hadrill, *Christian Antioch: A Study of Early Christian Thought in the East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 1.

10. Jacob Neusner, "Babylonia," *Jewish Encyclopedia*, https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/babylonia; Moffett, *History of Christianity in Asia*, 46, 51.

11. Crowe, *From Jerusalem to Antioch*, 84.

12. Crowe, 83–84.

13. John E. Stambaugh and David L. Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 95; Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into the Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 27.

14. Stambaugh and Balch, *New Testament*, 95.

it.[15] No wonder than that the New Testament account in Acts, which from chapter 10 forward centers on the spread of Christianity among non-Jewish peoples, fairly quickly turns to Antioch.[16]

First mention of the city occurs in the context of the selection of seven men to serve in the "daily ministration" of tables—or food distribution and other "financial and administrative matters"—for non-Jewish (or rather, for Hellenistic Jewish) widows (Acts 6:1–2).[17] Among those men was "Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch" (Acts 6:5). The seven men were each likely themselves Hellenistic Jews, as per their Greek names and the function to which the apostles ordained them.[18] The situation itself highlights differences already emerging in the first years of the church between Jewish believers from Palestine and believers originating from other parts of the world, in this case, diaspora Jews, or at the least, between Jewish peoples who maintained stronger ties to their Hebraic roots and Jewish peoples who were more Hellenistically inclined, such that Greek had become their primary language.[19] As Luke notes, the occasion for the ordaining of the seven men was that "there arose a

15. Martin Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem: The Clash of Ancient Civilizations* (New York: Vintage, 2008), 59.

16. Luke was likely Greek, and there is conjecture that he was born in Antioch, a former slave of Theophilus, to whom he addresses his two New Testament works. A. T. Robertson, *Luke the Historian in Light of Research* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), 18, 21; Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.4.7.

17. David H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (Clarksville, Md.: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1992), 239.

18. F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (New York: Anchor Books, 1972), 219; Crowe, *From Jerusalem to Antioch*, 62.

19. Michelle Slee, *The Church in Antioch in the First Century CE: Communion and Conflict* (New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 13; Crowe, *From Jerusalem to Antioch*, 62. Contra Slee and Crowe, Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 239, takes the position that the differences were largely regarding those of culture, not geographical origin, a position Slee also sees as having merit (15).

murmuring of the Grecians [or Hellenists] against the Hebrews" (Acts 6:1), specifically because their own widows were being ignored. In essence, then, we find in the early church a situation mirroring what must have been evident within the Jewish community itself: two groups, split by language—one speaking primarily Aramaic or possibly Hebrew, the other primarily Greek—and by extension split by culture, with separate ways of organization for each, a separation that the church itself would begin to mirror.[20] Indeed, among the Jewish peoples in Jerusalem, separate synagogues were maintained for different language groups, although learned peoples, merchants, and priests were generally fluent in multiple languages, including Aramaic, Greek, and Hebrew, a multilingualism that allowed the Christian message to spread quickly across linguistic and cultural groups within the Jewish community.[21] Outside Palestine, in the wider diaspora, however, "Greek language and culture were constant and dominating factors in the Jewish life."[22]

Hence, outside Jerusalem, the Hellenistic Greek-speaking element of the early church did not take long to spread. Among those ordained was a man named Stephen, whose zeal for the new teachings, along with "wonders and miracles" he performed "among the people" (Acts 6:8), brought him to prominence and to early persecution from the synagogue to which he likely, at one point, belonged, along possibly with Paul—that of the Freedmen. Said syn-

20. Crowe, *From Jerusalem to Antioch*, 62; Slee, *Church in Antioch*, 13.

21. Crowe, *From Jerusalem to Antioch*, 62; Slee, *Church in Antioch*, 13; Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 239; "Appendix D: The New Testament Was Originally in Greek," in *A Faithful Version: The Original Bible Restored*, 2nd ed. (Hollister, Calif.: York Publishing, 2009), https://afaithfulversion.org/appendices-d/; Martin Hengel, *The "Hellenization" of Judaea in the First Century after Christ* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989), 18.

22. Rajak, "Mediterranean Jewish Diaspora," 48.

agogue consisted perhaps of some proselytes but most especially of freed Jewish slaves from Cyrene (in Libya), Alexandria (in Egypt), Cilicia (in southern Turkey), and the Roman province of Asia (in western Turkey; Acts 6:9), whose families had initially been captured during Rome's takeover of Jerusalem in 63 BCE.[23] The accusations against Stephen were twofold: blasphemous words, first, against Moses and the law (Acts 6:11, 13–14) and, second, against the temple itself (Acts 6:13–14). With regard to the first accusation, Stephen likely argued against the oral traditions prescribed in the scribal interpretations that had been added to the law of Moses documented in the written Torah.[24] For some Jewish people, those customs were tantamount to the law itself and an attack on the one was an attack on the other, especially since many regarded the interpretation as stemming from Moses himself.[25]

In regard to the second accusation, Stephen's words echoed those of Jesus himself: that the temple would be destroyed. Although the immediate context of Jesus's words regarding the temple's destruction for which he had been put to death referred specifically to his own body (Matt. 26:61, John 2:19–21), other claims he made clearly foresaw the temple system's dissolution alongside the temple's annihilation (Matt. 24:2, Mark 13:2, Luke 21:6). Stephen, in like manner, seemed particularly skeptical of the temple order. "Since the God of Israel had in the past revealed himself in many different geographical locations

23. Bruce, *New Testament History*, 220, 238, 245; Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 240. Thomas A. Robinson, by contrast, believes the "Freedmen" label was more likely a reference to the synagogue's benefactors, finding it unlikely that the descendants of Jews captured by Pompey and then scattering to various regions would have felt a shared origin one hundred years later. Thomas A. Robinson, *Ignatius of Antioch and the Parting of the Ways: Early Christian Relations* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), 74.

24. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 240–241.

25. Stern, 240–241.

and not just in Israel," as Antiochene scholar Michelle Slee sums up a key point of Stephen's final sermon, recounted most succinctly in Acts 7:48–50, "there was consequently no reason for anyone to suppose that Yahweh could only now be known in the Temple in Jerusalem and only now be worshipped through sacrificial practices."[26] Such cynicism did not rest well with those involved with the temple's everyday functioning and Jerusalem's central position in the Jewish faith, and Stephen soon met his death at their hands.

That death, in turn, set off a wave of persecution among the Jewish believers in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1), one that resulted in the church's scattering, most especially among those of the more Hellenistically inclined followers from the diaspora, for as Acts 8:1 tells us, the apostles stayed in the city. This suggests, as Antioch church historian John P. Meier believes, when put together with the reference to "they which were scattered abroad" in Acts 11:19, that only certain kinds of followers left the area, of which the apostles were not originally part.[27] Indeed, Acts 6:7 tells us that a great number of priests converted, and unless those priests left off their profession, some would have had to have remained in the region to serve their two to three weeks of annual courses in the temple.[28] In fact, per Jewish tradition, half the priests were resident in Jerusalem itself.[29] Among the priests may have possibly been the

26. Slee, *Church in Antioch*, 14. On Stephen's criticism of temple order, see also Bruce, *New Testament History*, 222–223.

27. Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 32–33.

28. Bruce, *New Testament History*, 219–220. On priestly courses, see "The 24 Priestly Courses," https://torahcalendar.com/PDF/24PriestlyCourses.pdf; Alfred Edersheim, "The Officiating Priesthood," chapter 4 in *The Temple—Its Ministry and Services* (1874), Christian Classics Ethereal Library, https://www.ccel.org/ccel/edersheim/temple.vi.html.

29. Edersheim, "Officiating Priesthood," sec. "The Number of Priests."

apostle John, who the second-century Ephesian believer, Polycrates, in a letter to the Roman bishop Victor, makes mention of as "both a witness and a teacher, who reclined upon the bosom of the Lord, and being a priest wore the sacerdotal plate."[30] This would explain why John was known to the high priest and allowed to enter the high priest's palace in John 18:15–16 on the night before Jesus's crucifixion, while Peter was left standing outside until John got permission to bring him in. Some scholars have further posited that the mother of John and James was Salome and that she, in turn, was Jesus's mother Mary's sister, who in turn was cousin to Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, who was a descendent of Aaron (Luke 1:5) and whose husband was himself a priest. In other words, Mary and Salome were related to a priestly family, and as such,

30. Quoted in Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.31.3. Some scholars claim that the John referred to by Polycrates was not the apostle but rather John the elder or presbyter, this based on the fact that Papias seems to refer to two Johns in his recounting of listening to those who had had direct contact with Jesus. See Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.39.4; Paul Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius* (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 243–258; Richard Bauckham, "Papias and Polycrates on the Origin of the Fourth Gospel," *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s. 44 (1993): 24–69; and more generally, Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006). Indeed, Acts 4:6 references a priest named John among the kindred of the high priest Annas, who is distinguished from the John taken prisoner with Peter; however, an understanding that John the elder was the writer of the Gospel of John would suggest that others beyond the twelve were present at Jesus's final Passover (a fact not supported by Luke 22:14) and that John the apostle had a much smaller role among the twelve, since many of the passages involving John would thus revolve around someone other than the one who became an apostle. That said, John being a common name among Jewish people in the first century, it is quite possible that events and facts involving the apostle John became mixed up with another with the same name.

the Zebedees, John and James, would have had priestly responsibilities themselves.[31]

If such be the case, several of the apostles may have had ties to the temple—and to its attendant traditions. As such, Peter's continuing observance of various stricter aspects of Jewish practice would have reflected his close association with priestly families, even though he himself had been born in the "largely pagan, gentile, Greek-speaking context of Bethsaida" (as per John 1:44) but probably of "a consciously, perhaps even devoutly, Jewish family."[32] Thus, Peter's comment in Acts 11:8 that "nothing common or unclean [had] at any time entered into [his] mouth," a comment repeated elsewhere, would have reflected not only food practices of Leviticus 11 but also Jewish practices that separated the socializing of Jewish people at meal times from their non-Jewish counterparts. Jewish people often considered the houses of non-Jewish peoples "ritually unclean," which by extension led Jewish people to a kind of "self-imposed separation from Gentiles" that, in turn, led

31. The identification of Salome with the mother of James and John is hypothesized by putting together the identification of the three women identified as being present at Jesus's death in Matthew 27:56, Mark 15:40, and John 19:25 and may be further corroborated in surviving writings of Papias. A. E. Johnston, "Was John the Son of Zebedee a Priest?," *Irish Church Quarterly* 2, no. 8 (October 1909): 292–307, esp. 295–298; Papias, "Fragments of Papias," trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, chap. 10, Early Christian Writings, https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01/anf01.vii.ii.x.html. See also Ernest L. Martin, "The Apostle John and Canonization," chapter 19 in *Restoring the Original Bible* (Portland, Ore.: Associates for Scriptural Knowledge, 1994), https://www.askelm.com/restoring/res025.htm; and Finch, *Beyond Acts*, 185. Martin gets around the fact that Jesus was known as being not of the tribe of Levi but of Judah (Heb. 7:13–14) by claiming the ancestral line in Luke 3:23–38 refers not to Mary but to Joseph's stepfather.

32. Markus Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter in Scripture and Memory: The New Testament Apostle in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2012), 180.

the Jews to call Gentiles themselves unclean.[33] Even though Jesus had been skeptical of Pharisaic table practices involving ritual washings and standards of cleanliness (see, for example, Luke 11:37–40, Matt. 23:25–26, and Mark 7:19), Peter obviously remained hesitant to abandon them in certain contexts involving his Jerusalem comrades, as Galatians 2:12 makes clear. Thus, the scattering recounted in Acts 8:4 and 11:19 further documents differences emerging among the adherents to the young faith.

One of the locations specifically mentioned to which the Hellenistic followers scattered after Stephen's death was Antioch (Acts 11:19), a location seemingly quite natural for dissemination given that at least one of the seven deacons ordained in Acts 6:5 was originally from there. Not only was Antioch an important center for trade in the first century, it also featured, like many cities of the Roman Empire, a large Jewish contingent, perhaps making up as much as 5 to 10 percent of the city's 45,000 to 400,000 inhabitants.[34] Indeed, Jewish people had forged part of the population of the city from its very beginning, the earliest settlers likely having been retired soldiers from the former Babylonian kingdom.[35] Documentation exists for at least three synagogues in the first-century city, and a

33. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 258–259.

34. Magnus Zetterholm, *The Formation of Christianity in Antioch: A Social-Scientific Approach to the Separation between Judaism and Christianity* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 28, 42; Slee, *Church in Antioch*, 2; Meeks and Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch*, 8; Rodney Stark, "Urban Chaos and Crisis: The Case of Antioch," chap. 7 in *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 149. Population estimates vary widely, with Meeks and Wilken on the low end, Zetterholm on the high, and Slee and Stark somewhere in the middle. Thomas A. Robinson gives a similarly wide range—of one hundred thousand to eight hundred thousand inhabitants and twenty thousand to forty-five thousand Jewish people. Thomas A. Robinson, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 14–15, 18.

35. Stambaugh and Balch, *New Testament*, 146; Magnus Zetterholm, *Formation of Christianity in Antioch*, 31

total of twenty to thirty is not outside the realm of probability.[36] Synagogue culture was not homogenous. Different synagogues served differing populations, be they Jewish people of a particular geographical origin, linguistic ability, social milieu, or specific ideology, as evidenced by the mention earlier of Stephen's synagogue of freed Jewish slaves.[37] Some synagogues were likely "more open to innovative ideas than others," an understanding also clear from the differing ways in which Paul's message was received in varying locations.[38]

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36. Magnus Zetterholm, *Formation of Christianity in Antioch*, 37–38.

37. Magnus Zetterholm, 92. Thomas A. Robinson finds Zetterholm's claims doubtful; more likely, he believes, "Most Jews . . . probably experienced Judaism in a synagogue that encompassed diversity as a matter of course." Christians, he states, could not have been expelled from synagogues if they had had their own. While the New Testament provides ample evidence for diversity within a single synagogue, insofar as synagogues often included both Jewish people and non-Jewish visitors and offered opportunity for disputes in point of view (see, e.g., Acts 17:17; 18:4, 26), Robinson's claim fails to take into account the fact that in the early going, there would obviously have been no Christian synagogues, and that after the Christian message had been spread, Christians created their own gatherings (i.e., synagogues), most often in homes, but occasionally in other locations (see, e.g., Acts 16:13, 18:8–9). Indeed, Robinson concedes that "the largest cities would have had multiple synagogues"—and Antioch, as such, certainly would have qualified in that regard. Thomas A. Robinson, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 75.

38. Magnus Zetterholm, *Formation of Christianity in Antioch*, 92. See, for example, the account in Acts 18:5–17, wherein Paul's message in Corinth is noted variously as being rejected by a number of Jewish people in one synagogue (Acts 18:5–7) but accepted by synagogue rulers Crispus (Acts 18:8) and Sosthenes (Acts 18:17), along with the former's household. Interpretations of this abound—that Crispus and Sosthenes were of different synagogues, that they were both members of a single synagogue council, that one succeeded the other as ruler of the same synagogue, and that they were even the same person. See Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 290; and various commentaries on "Acts 18:8" (https://biblehub.com/commentaries/acts/18

The spread specifically of Greek-speaking followers of Jesus meant that the synagogues most impacted in Antioch were likely those that were less focused on the temple, its rites, and the various concerns of Pharisaically minded Palestinian Jews. Indeed, although the Christian message was first spread among Jewish people only (Acts 11:19), it was not long before the message began to spread among those who were not Jewish (Acts 11:20). That Jewish and non-Jewish people mixed in Jewish synagogues is attested to not only in numerous passages in Acts (13:42; 14:1; 15:21; 17:4, 12; 18:4) but also implied in the writings of the Jewish first-century historian Flavius Josephus. Of the people of Antioch specifically, Josephus noted that the Jewish people "made proselytes of a great many of the Greeks perpetually, and thereby after a sort brought them to be a portion of their own body."[39] The first-century Alexandrian Jewish thinker Philo noted that those "willing to forsake their old ways and to come over to the customs and constitutions of the Jews . . . are not to be rejected and treated with hostility as the children of enemies."[40] The means by which this might be achieved is recorded perhaps in Philo's description of the synagogue service: "On the seventh day there are spread before the people in every city innumerable lessons of prudence, and temperance, and courage, and justice, and all other virtues; during the giving of which the common people sit down, keeping silence and pricking up their ears, with all possible attention, from their thirst for wholesome instruction; but some of those

-8.htm) and "Acts 18:17" (https://biblehub.com/commentaries/acts/18-17.htm) available at Bible Hub.

39. Flavius Josephus, *Wars of the Jews: Or History of the Destruction of Jerusalem*, trans. William Whiston, 7.3.3., Project Gutenberg, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2850/2850-h/2850-h.htm#link72HCH0003.

40. Philo, *On the Virtues*, 21.8, in *The Works of Philo*, trans. and ed. Charles Duke Yonge (London, H. G. Bohn, 1854–1890), Early Christian Writings, http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/yonge/book31.html.

who are very learned explain to them what is of great importance and use, lessons by which the whole of their lives may be improved."[41]

Nor was non-Jewish interest in the Jewish world recorded only among Jewish writers. Juvenal, in his *Satires*, takes a rather dour view of those who found love for Jewish ways, testimony to the fact that indeed some non-Jewish persons certainly did:

> Some whose lot it is to have a father that reveres sabbaths, worship nothing save clouds and the divinity of heaven; and think that flesh of swine, from which their sire abstained, differs in naught from that of man. Soon, too, they submit to circumcision. But, trained to look with scorn upon the laws of Rome, they study and observe and reverence all those Jewish statutes that Moses in his mystic volume handed down: never to show the road except to one that worships the same sacred rites—to conduct to the spring they are in quest of, the circumcised alone. But their father is to blame for this; to whom each seventh day was a day of sloth, and kept aloof from all share of life's daily duties.[42]

Similarly, the first-century Stoic philosopher and statesman Seneca would complain of the Jewish people, in his work *Against Superstitions*, as preserved in Augustine's *City of God*, "The customs of that most accursed nation have gained such strength that they have been now re-

41. Philo, *The Special Laws II*, 15.62, in *The Works of Philo*, http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/yonge/book28.html.

42. Juvenal, *The Satires of Juvenal, Persius, Suplicia, and Lucilius*, trans. Lewis Evans (Franklin Square: Harper and Brothers, 1881), satire 14, Project Gutenberg, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/50657/50657-h/50657-h.htm.

ceived in all lands, the conquered have given laws to the conquerors."[43]

Magnus Zetterholm, in his work on the formation of Christianity in Antioch, posits that the appeal of the Jewish synagogue to non-Jewish peoples had to do with more than mere curiosity. Antioch, in the first century, like many ancient cities, was a polluted, disease- and crime-ridden settlement with a density of perhaps as many as 195 people per acre (by comparison, Mumbai, India, often considered the densest modern city, had approximately 119 people per acre in 2019).[44] This meant, in turn, that Antioch experienced a high mortality rate and, by extension, was dependent on a constant influx of inhabitants, attracted by the economic opportunities the city offered, to maintain its high population.[45] Persistent population turnover, alongside high crime, would have resulted in a society consisting of mostly alienated individuals.[46] Standing against this isolation would have been the Roman *collegium*—or club or association. With an eye toward preventing rebellious political activity, the Romans allowed people to forge only three types of clubs, which thus had the ability to assemble for regular social opportunities: professional groups (cen-

43. Augustine, *City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods, 6.11, from *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 1st series, vol. 2, ed. Philip Schaff (Buffalo, N.Y.: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887), revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/120106.htm.

44. Magnus Zetterholm, *Formation of Christianity in Antioch*, 28–29; Stark, "Urban Chaos and Crisis," 150; Crowe, *From Jerusalem to Antioch*, 79; Elzy Kolb, "75,000 People per Square Mile? These Are the Most Densely Populated Cities in the World," *USA Today*, July 11, 2019, https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2019/07/11/the-50-most-densely-populated-cities-in-the-world/39664259/. The city proper was approximately two square miles in size. Stark, 149.

45. Magnus Zetterholm, *Formation of Christianity in Antioch*, 30; Stark, "Urban Chaos and Crisis," 149–161.

46. Magnus Zetterholm, *Formation of Christianity in Antioch*, 126; Stark, "Urban Chaos and Crisis," 156.

tered around a profession), religious groups, and burial societies (for the purpose of paying for decent burials for the poor).[47] Any of these would have provided opportunity for newcomers to meet and make local acquaintances, but the second especially, centered around a specific god, would have provided a special connection to one's home country and culture, and it is the second into which the Jewish synagogue would have fit.

The appeal of the synagogue to non-Jewish people newly arrived in the city in turn would have rested on at least three bases. First, as Seneca himself acknowledged in his complaint against the Jewish faith, was the fact that the Jewish people knew "the cause of their rites, while the greater part of the people know not why they perform theirs."[48] In other words, the Jewish faith seemed to offer a greater degree of philosophical insight and purpose, and thus for a person not already acquainted and associated with a specific locally available faith, Jewish religious gatherings would have offered an intellectual stimulation, set of ethical considerations, and seeming purpose not available at other religious gatherings.[49] Indeed, Jewish thinkers of the time often played up the philosophical aspects of their faith, ignoring its stranger traditions, in an effort to make the religion seem much more like a Greek philosophical system, exported to the whole world, than merely the national faith of a conquered people.[50] Thus, Josephus could write of Greek philosopher Pythagoras that he "did not only know [Jewish] doctrines, but was in very great measure a follower and admirer of them" to the ex-

47. Stambaugh and Balch, *New Testament*, 124–126.

48. Seneca, *Against Superstitions*, qtd. in Augustine, *City of God*, 6.11.

49. John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2000), 12; Crowe, *From Jerusalem to Antioch*, 90.

50. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 15.

tent that "he took a great many of the laws of the Jews into his own philosophy."[51] Similarly, Philo would claim Moses as one who had "reached the very summits of philosophy," from which the Greeks themselves had drawn many of their ideas.[52]

A second appeal would have been the ancientness of the Jewish faith. As Zetterholm notes, "The Romans had a weakness for ancient traditions."[53] Although the Romans were skeptical of new cults and limited their ability to establish legally sanctioned associations, old and well-established faiths were respected. Indeed, "the older and more eastern things were, the more divine and the more credible they were."[54] This very fact is demonstrated by the manner in which, despite the various Jewish revolts against Rome in the first two centuries CE, adherents to the Jewish religion continued to benefit from exceptions to mandates regarding state religion (for example, sacrifice to the emperor) that Christians, once pushed out of the Jewish synagogue, often were not afforded.[55] Indeed,

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51. Flavius Josephus, *Against Apion*, trans. William Whiston, 1.22, Project Gutenberg, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2849/2849-h/2849-h.htm#link2H_4_0001.

52. Philo, *On the Creation*, 2.7, in *The Works of Philo*, https://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/text/philo/book1.html; Marian Hillar, "Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 BCE–40 CE)," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, https://iep.utm.edu/philo/.

53. Magnus Zetterholm, *Formation of Christianity in Antioch*, 219.

54. L. H. Friedman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 177, qtd. in Magnus Zetterholm, *Formation of Christianity in Antioch*, 219. A similar claim is made in Nicholas Taylor, *Paul, Antioch, and Jerusalem: A Study in the Relationships and Authority in Earliest Christianity* (Sheffield: Journal for the Study of the New Testament Press, 1992): "Antiquity was a well-known criterion for religious respectability in the Graeco-Roman world" (155).

55. Stambaugh and Balch, *New Testament*, 131; Graham Anderson, *Sage, Saint, and Sophist: Holy Men and Their Associates in the Early Roman Empire* (London: Routledge, 1994), 165–166; Henry Fairfield Burton, "The Worship of the Roman Emperors," *Biblical World* 40, no.

many of the second-century Christian apologists, in addition to attempting to demonstrate the harmlessness of their faith and loyalty to the government, would argue, as various Jewish thinkers had, that their faith was in fact the precursor to many ancient ideas. Justin Martyr, in his *First Apology*, for example, would note various parallels between ancient philosophy and Christian doctrine:

> For while we say that all things have been produced and arranged into a world by God, we shall seem to utter the doctrine of Plato; and while we say that there will be a burning up of all, we shall seem to utter the doctrine of the Stoics: and while we affirm that the souls of the wicked, being endowed with sensation even after death, are punished, and that those of the good being delivered from punishment spend a blessed existence, we shall seem to say the same things as the poets and philosophers; and while we maintain that men ought not to worship the works of their hands, we say the very things which have been said by the comic poet Menander, and other similar writers, for they have declared that the workman is greater than the work.[56]

These facts, Justin claims, demonstrate not just mere parallels, however, but that "whatever [ideas] we assert in conformity with what has been taught us by Christ, and by the prophets who preceded Him, are . . . older than all

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2 (August 1912): 90; Peter Hirschberg, "Jewish Believers in Asia Minor according to the Book of Revelation and the Gospel of John," in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, ed. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 222.

56. Justin Martyr, *The First Apology of Justin*, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, chap. 20, Early Christian Writings, http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/justinmartyr-firstapology.html.

the writers who have existed."[57] Like their Jewish counterparts, some Greek thinkers, too, had talked of the ancientness of Jewish thought. "All that has been said regarding nature by the ancients is asserted also by philosophers out of Greece, on the one part in India by the Brachmanes, and on the other in Syria by the people called the Jews," Megasthenes, a Greek historian who wrote about Indian culture and who lived some three hundred years before Jesus, is reported to have written, for example.[58] As such, although Roman writers like Juvenal and Seneca might have voiced a certain despising of things Jewish, they also at times voiced admiration, even as Seneca acknowledged in his mixed comments. In short, in the early first century, as Zetterholm notes, "Jews were hated *and* admired, feared *and* respected" by those who were not Jewish, a mixture of feelings that would allow for the appeal of synagogue attendance to non-Jewish migrants and, in turn, as hate and fear took precedent, for the eventual separation of non-Jewish from Jewish synagogue patrons during the Christian era.[59]

The third and perhaps strongest appeal of the synagogue to non-Jewish migrants would have been the fact that many of them would have lacked a local connection to the religion particular to their home and thus to a wider network of similarly thinking individuals. The gods one worshipped were often family or city based such that a location at which to worship such gods did not exist when separate from one's family or place of birth.[60] Further, even

57. Justin Martyr, chap. 23.

58. Megasthenes, *Indika*, fragment 42, http://www.sdstate.edu/projectsouthasia/upload/Megasthene-Indika.pdf.

59. Magnus Zetterholm, *Formation of Christianity in Antioch*, 124.

60. Elmer Truesdell Merrill, "The Attitude of Ancient Rome toward Religion and Religious Cults," *Classical Journal* 15, no. 4 (January 1920): 196–197, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3288303; Larry Hurtado, *Destroyer of the Gods: Early Christian Distinctiveness in the Roman World* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2016), 78.

if one embraced a more well-known god, Roman associations were local, which meant that one could not simply transfer from an association in one city to the same association in another.[61] There were no transcity organizations, as such would have been considered a threat to Roman power.[62] Furthermore, some faiths remained illegal in particular locations in the empire at particular times, when they were suspected of being morally decadent or threatening to social order.[63] Grecian Dionysian rites, for example, were banned in Rome in 186 BCE because they were perceived as being secret and dangerous in that they drew people involved into an uncontrollable frenzy.[64] Likewise, though with limited and lackluster enforcement, worship of the Egyptian gods Isis and Serapis were banned at times in Rome until the mid-first century CE, in part because of Mark Antony's use of Egypt as his base of power in attempting to wrest control of the empire for himself.[65] In 19 CE, after a perceived sexual scandal involving the faith, the Roman emperor Tiberius crucified some five hundred adherents to the cult, destroyed its Roman temple, and cast images of Isis into the Tiber River.[66] With Jewish people making up as much as 10 or 15 percent of the empire, by contrast, Jewish synagogues were widespread and the religion and its attendant gatherings lawfully recognized.[67]

61. Magnus Zetterholm, *Formation of Christianity in Antioch*, 126.
62. Zetterholm, 126.
63. Merrill, "Attitude of Ancient Rome," 202.
64. Robert M. Grant, *Gods and the One God* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 40.
65. Grant, 34; "Cult of Isis," sec. "How Did Different Roman Emperors View the Cult of Isis?," UNRV Roman History, https://www.unrv.com/culture/isis.php.
66. "Cult of Isis," sec. "How Did Different Roman Emperors View the Cult of Isis?"; Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.3.4.
67. Pinchas Landis, "The Surge of Converts to Judaism in Ancient Rome," Aish, May, 29, 2022, https://aish.com/the-surge-of-converts-to-judaism-in-ancient-rome/; Crowe, *From Jerusalem to Antioch*, 86; Merrill, "Attitude of Ancient Rome," 211.

In turn, with a somewhat centralized government based around the Jerusalem Sanhedrin, synagogues forged a kind of loose network, with "some local organization that would strictly be called political or governmental . . . conceded to Jewish colonies in Roman cities."[68] As such, as Zetterholm notes, "the synagogue represented an institution which transcended city borders" and which in turn would have stood against the kind of isolation experienced by so many urban inhabitants.[69]

Alongside the non-Jewish attraction to Jewish gatherings stood the fact that many diaspora Jews did not have the same hang-ups regarding cultural mixing as many Jewish people located near the Jewish temple in Palestine did. Indeed, as Tessa Rajak notes, in Antioch, "the Jews of the city were also culturally, Greeks."[70] No doubt, this is something of a simplification, but it encapsulates the way in which the vast majority of Jewish people, separated from the temple context, would have experienced their everyday lives, much as descendants of immigrants to the United States might maintain certain ethnic ties to and religious traditions from their ancestral homeland while also being, on the whole, culturally American. Magnus Zetterholm, citing the work of E. M. Hamburg, complicates this somewhat by noting how, in fact, sociologically, immigrants usually find one of four ways to adapt religious beliefs and practices to the new dominant culture around them: little to

68. Merrill, "Attitude of Ancient Rome," 211. See also Crowe, *From Jerusalem to Antioch*, 87.

69. Magnus Zetterholm, *Formation of Christianity in Antioch*, 126. Against this claim is that of Thomas A. Robinson, who asserts that newcomers would have been unlikely to take an interest in Jewish synagogues as they'd have needed time to discover the Jewish social network and to be comfortable enough in the city to feel free to join it. Rather, Robinson believes, Jewish-curious patrons (God-fearers) and proselytes were more likely drawn from the city's permanent residents. Robinson, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 64.

70. Rajak, "Mediterranean Jewish Diaspora," 49.

no change; a weakening of such practices; a strengthening of such practices; and a wholesale conversion to the practices of their new home, leaving their own traditions behind.[71] Zetterholm finds examples in first-century Antioch that seem to demonstrate each of these reactions among Jewish inhabitants: "very Hellenistic Jews who nevertheless looked upon themselves as Jews"; Jews, on the very edge of their cultural heritage, who "clearly intended to leave Judaism"; and Jews who separated themselves from Gentiles and from other Jews who were not like-mindedly strict about the Torah and various Jewish traditions.[72] Although the Jewish religion at the start of the first century was not the more homogenous faith that would come to be known as Judaism in the centuries after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, the legally strict and arguably separatist Pharisaic sect dominated Jerusalem and Judea in ways that it did not yet dominate the more diverse Jewish diaspora, which remained much more pluralistic and less defined.[73] Nevertheless, across the various Jewish sects and, indeed, among the general Jewish population that was inclined to maintain its religious heritage and that rarely held strong affinity to any particular sect, a couple of general beliefs remained common: acceptance of the Jewish scriptures, especially the Torah, and a common

71. E. M. Hamburg, "Migration and Religious Change," in *Towards a New Understanding of Conversion*, ed. U. Gorman (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1999), 33, qtd. in Magnus Zetterholm, *Formation of Christianity in Antioch*, 70.

72. Magnus Zetterholm, *Formation of Christianity in Antioch*, 90. Zetterholm gives as an example of one who leaves off Jewish practice Antiochus of Antioch, who accused his own people of planning to burn the city (discussed later), and as an example of one who maintains even stronger Jewish ties, the mother and sons of *2 Maccabees* 7 who give up their lives to demonstrate their continuing loyalty to the Torah, a tale that some identify as occurring in Antioch. Zetterholm, 75–76, 81.

73. Magnus Zetterholm, *Formation of Christianity in Antioch*, 65.

perception of themselves as Jews as opposed to Gentiles.[74] Where differences occurred among Jewish people was in how they viewed the temple, the law of Moses, and various purity regulations.[75] Such wide latitude afforded some Jewish synagogue communities a much more welcoming permissiveness when it came to the integration of non-Jewish patrons among the Jewish attendees.

Nevertheless, the spread of the new faith among non-Jewish synagogue attendees would have proved problematic had not Peter already baptized the household of Cornelius in Caesarea after his vision regarding what constituted a clean person (Acts 10). Indeed, the initial focus of the preaching of the Hellenistic Jews scattered after Stephen's death was other diaspora Jews (Acts 11:19). The event involving Cornelius, however, enabled unfettered access to a new audience that clearly some Hellenistic Jews had no problem approaching, such that when "the church that was in Jerusalem" heard "tidings" of the work that was being done among non-Jewish peoples, it felt compelled to send Barnabas to these new believers, "as far as Antioch" (Acts 11:22). Indeed, even without Peter's vision, it seems likely that the issue with regard to the conversion of non-Jewish people would have arisen fairly soon anyway; given the manner in which non-Jewish people were often present among synagogue attendees, especially in diaspora cities such as Antioch, some would inevitably have been intrigued by the story of Jesus. At some point, church leaders would have had to confront the issue with regard to whether conversion of a non-Jewish person required that person to become fully Jewish. Had such been the final decision, Christianity would have remained forever a Jewish-only sect and any non-Jewish sympathizers would have been forever relegated to the status of God-fearers, non-

74. Zetterholm, 56.
75. Zetterholm, 56.

Jewish people who embraced the Jewish faith but did not adhere fully to its customs, their salvation status remaining in limbo, if not simply considered inadequate. By contrast, upon news of Cornelius's conversion, the Jerusalem believers declared, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18).

Barnabas, Paul, and the Emergence of "Christians"

The sending forth of Barnabas mirrored the manner in which the Jerusalem church had earlier followed up the deacon Philip's preaching in Samaria with a visit from Peter and John (Acts 8:5–6, 14–17), except Barnabas was not one of the twelve. The choice of Barnabas for this mission, however, seems a particularly appropriate one, insofar as the man apparently had connections to both Palestinian and Hellenistic Jewish societies. On one hand, Luke claims Barnabas was a Levite (Acts 4:36) and thus one who likely would have been involved in the ministration of physical duties surrounding the Jerusalem temple.[76] Barnabas had also been one of the earliest converts to the new church, having sold land and given the proceeds to the apostles to share among believers (Acts 4:36–37), as had been the practice in the church's earliest months (Acts 4:34–35). In other words, Barnabas had already demonstrated strong commitment to the Jerusalem church at the same time that his qualifications were near impeccable when it came to ensuring that any new non-Jewish converts would fit within the expectations of those belonging to the larger Jewish religion. On the other hand, Luke notes that Barnabas was "of the country of Cyprus" (Acts 4:36) and thus

76. Jonathan Stokl, "Priests and Levites in the First Century C.E.," Bible Odyssey, December 4, 2022, https://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/passages/related-articles/priests-and-levites-in-the-first-century-ce.

had ties to the believers who were part of the Hellenistically inclined diaspora that had scattered from Jerusalem, because of their critical views of the temple, and had in turn preached the gospel to the Gentiles in Antioch (Acts 11:20). As such, Barnabas also would have had cultural and personal connections to those who were developing this new mission field.

Barnabas's unique ability to weave skillfully between different stakeholders had already been demonstrated in the situation regarding the new believer Paul, whose former life as a persecutor of the church had made him persona non grata among many of the Jerusalem believers (Acts 9:26). Whether Barnabas had been in Damascus to hear Paul's preaching in the synagogues after his conversion or whether he had merely heard of that preaching secondhand from associates he had in Damascus, Barnabas became the conduit through whom Paul's conversion was accepted three years later by Peter and James in Jerusalem (Acts 9:27, Gal. 1:18–19). Clearly, Barnabas's links both to the diaspora and to Jerusalem afforded this introduction.

Barnabas was evidently taken with Paul. Quite possibly a very good encourager or exhorter of the faith (as per the name given him by the apostles; Acts 4:36), Barnabas would have found in Paul someone of similarly mixed background.[77] Although Paul was of the Israelite tribe of Benjamin rather than Levi (Rom. 11:1), he claims to have been trained by the famous Jewish rabbi Gamaliel (Acts 22:3) and clearly had ties to the strict Jewish law-abiding Pharisee sect and to political interests affiliated with the priests and temple, as evidenced in his gaining authority from the high priest Caiaphas to bring followers of Jesus as

77. The name itself means son of counsel, comfort, exhortation, or encouragement, with "son of" having the sense of "one who had the quality of." Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 235.

far afield as Damascus to trial (Acts 9:1–2).[78] At the same time, Paul had been born in the diaspora community of Tarsus in southeast Asia Minor (Acts 21:39, 22:3) and had knowledge not only of the Greek language, which would have been typical, but of Greek culture, as evidenced by his usage of Stoic philosophy in his own discourses.[79] In a

78. Most scholars place the dates for Paul's conversion to Christianity sometime between 33 and 36 CE. Caiaphas served as high priest from 18 to 37 CE. For chronologies, see Janet Meyers Everts, "The Apostle Paul and His Times: Christian History Timeline," *Christianity Today*, https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/issues/issue-47/apostle-paul-and-his-times-christian-history-timeline.html; Finch, *Beyond Acts*, 270–293; "Chronology V: From the Crucifixion in 30 AD to the Destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD," in *A Faithful Version: The Original Bible Restored*, https://afaithfulversion.org/chronology-5/. For dating on the high priest, see "Acts 9:1," *Meyer's New Testament Commentary*, Bible Hub, https://biblehub.com/commentaries/acts/9-1.htm; and "List of High Priests in Ancient Israel," Bible History: Maps, Images, Archaeology, https://bible-history.com/highpriests/list-of-jewish-high-priests. For further explanation on the references to the high priests in the time of Jesus and the early church, see "Annas and Caiaphus," BibleVerseStudy.com, https://www.bibleversestudy.com/johngospel/john18-annas-and-caiaphas.htm; and Don Stewart, "Who Were the High Priest's Annas and Caiaphus?," Blue Letter Bible, https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don_stewart/don_stewart_1314.cfm.

79. Paul, for example, quotes from the Stoic philosopher Aratus in Acts 17:28. Although biblical scholars debate the degree to which Stoicism influenced Paul's ideas, "the general culture and thought of the times, to which Stoicism as well as other movements contributed, may have influenced him." Frederick Clifton Grant, "St. Paul and Stoicism," *Biblical World* 45, no. 5 (1915): 276. For other discussions of Paul's use of Stoic ideas, see, for example, Runar M. Thorsteinsson, "Stoicism as a Key to Pauline Ethics in Romans," in *Stoicism in Early Christianity*, ed. Tuomas Rasimus, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, and Ismo Dunderberg (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2010), 15–38; Ronald Nash, "Was the New Testament Influenced by Stoicism?," Christian Research Institute, March 30, 2009, https://www.equip.org/articles/was-the-new-testament-influenced-by-stoicism/. Tarsus was an epicenter for both Stoic philosophy, as well as arguably Epicurean. Grant, 273; Renée Koch Piettre, "Paul and the Athens Epicureans: Between Polytheisms, Atheisms, and Monotheisms," *Diogenes* 205 (2005): 53.

sense, although Peter was clearly less educated (as per Acts 4:13), Peter, Paul, and Barnabas, with their Jewish backgrounds in addition to their diaspora upbringing among the larger Greco-Roman culture, were all well suited to the spread of the Gospel among a wide audience.

Barnabas's appreciation for Paul's training, skills, and experience led him to recruit him for the work he had been asked to do in Antioch (Acts 11:25–26). There, the two preached and guided the believers for a year. One local tradition, recorded by Byzantine historian John Malalas, notes that the two did much of their preaching on a street "called Singon or Siagon ('jawbone')" near Antioch's Pantheon, a temple dedicated to all the gods.[80] Mention of such a location demonstrates the ease of access Paul and Barnabas would have had to curious non-Jewish people. Beyond that, however, it also implies that the two focused the spread of their message primarily on such people, suggesting perhaps that the two had worn out their welcome at whatever Jewish synagogues they had become part of. Further to that suggestion, another tradition notes that Luke's Theophilus donated his home for use of the church.[81] Whether such accounts are true or not, the preservation of such anecdotes makes clear the emphasis placed by early historians on Antiochene Christianity's connection to those outside the Jewish orbit, an emphasis that would have growing importance to the history of the church as it would be rendered in later centuries.

Indeed, even the name "Christian" would become a means by which to distinguish an emerging sect separate from the Jewish religion. The mention in Acts 11:26 of the first usage of the name in the context of Barnabas

80. Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 275; Malalas, *Chronography*, 10.242, Aikaterini Laskaridis Foundation, Topos Text, https://topostext.org/work/793; Hans Otten, "Pantheon," Classical Antiquity, http://ancientworld.hansotten.com/italy/rome/pantheon/.

81. Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 277.

and Paul's first year of ministry in Antioch suggests a link to the start of this separation. The term almost certainly had non-Jewish origins, deriving from use among nonbelievers. As David H. Stern notes, "Jewish believers would have designated their Gentile brothers in faith by the same term they used for themselves, 'people belonging to the Way' (Acts 9:2&N)."[82] Further, nonbelieving Jewish people would almost certainly not "have permitted any possible suggestion that Jesus was indeed the Messiah" by giving the sect a name that implied confirmation of the group's claim; rather, the term nonbelieving Jewish people would have used was "Nazarene," as in followers of that man from Nazareth (as used in Acts 24:5).[83] In all likelihood, nonbelieving non-Jewish people heard the Greek term for Messiah, "Christos," being bandied about and, not being familiar with the Jewish concept, assumed the word to be a proper name and thus applied it, probably in most cases derogatorily, to the entire group, as in "followers of Christ," much as in the twenty-first century we have our Marxists, Leninists, and Trumpists.[84]

A contrary view holds that the term was self-assigned, stemming from the creation of a separate synagogue with such a designation, in a manner similar to the way that the synagogue that had disputed with Stephen had been designated that of the Freedmen (Acts 6:9).[85] Followers of Jesus, particularly non-Jewish ones, in this point of view, "express[ed] their relationship to the Messiah: they were the agents and representatives of the anointed King," doing so to "distinguish themselves from both Pagans and

82. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 262.

83. Quote from Crowe, *From Jerusalem to Antioch*, 98; Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 262.

84. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 262.

85. Justin Taylor, "Why Were the Disciples First Called 'Christians' at Antioch? (Acts 11, 26)," *Revue Biblique* 101, no. 1 (January 1994): 81; Magnus Zetterholm, *Formation of Christianity in Antioch*, 94–95.

Jews."[86] Although this was likely the case later on, as evidenced by frequent usage in the writings of early second-century Antiochene author Ignatius, for example, the idea that non-Jewish believers felt a need to separate from their Jewish brethren at this early date seems unlikely: they were adopting a set of beliefs that belonged to what was then chiefly known as a Jewish sect, and it was primarily nonbelieving Jewish people who seemed intent on making a distinction between followers of Jesus and themselves, as seen in the persecution encouraged by the Jewish priests and other temple loyalists, such as the pre-Christian Paul, and by the ways in which followers of Jesus were dismissed from the synagogues (John 9:22, 12:42). Furthermore, non-Jewish people would not have had the same sort of connection to the Messianic concept—the savior of a conquered nation—that those who were Jewish did; rather, the more common way to introduce Jesus to non-Jewish people was as "Lord" (see, for example, Acts 11:21, 23; 13:48; 14:3; 15:35; 17:24; 19:10).[87]

If the timing of the first usage of "Christian" coincides with Paul and Barnabas's first year in the city, the local popularization of the term would have also coincided with tensions emerging between Jewish and non-Jewish people in the city as a whole. In the third year of the Roman emperor Gaius's reign (40 CE), Antioch erupted in rioting. The occasion for the commotion remains somewhat obscure and unclear, but apparently its start derived from some sporting events in the city wherein rival factions (the Blues and the Greens) began to fight. Eventually, the dis-

86. Justin Taylor, "Why Were the Disciples," 81, 82.

87. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 262; Justin Taylor, "Why Were the Disciples," 91. A further argument with regard to the self-designation centers on the fact that the verb usage in the original Greek is one used primarily for self-reflexivity; however, the limitation of the verb form to reflexive uses was a later innovation, one that would not have applied at the time Acts was written. Taylor, 81, 83.

agreement led non-Jewish people to attack the Jewish segment of the population. Synagogues burned; people died. In response, according to an apocryphal tale recounted by John Malalas, the Jewish high priest, Phineas, sent several thousand men from Jerusalem to take revenge.[88] The resulting carnage, in Malalas's telling, led to the dismissal of a couple of local Roman officials and to the high priest's beheading.

How exactly a sporting event would lead to attacks on the city's Jewish population is open to speculation. Tensions between Jewish people and non-Jewish had certainly manifested elsewhere in the empire in the years leading up to the event. Gaius had tried to place a statue of himself in the Jerusalem temple only shortly before the Antiochene riots, and shortly before that, in 38 and 40 CE, Jewish people in the Egyptian city of Alexandria had been massacred after conflict had arisen between them and other inhabitants of the metropolis. Jewish participation in such sporting events was also not unheard of, and it's possible that the disturbance had arisen in relation to the Jewish role at the event.[89] As Justin Taylor notes in his article on the historical origins of the usage of the word "Christian," Jewish people in Antioch were clearly a cause for concern in the Roman Empire at the time.[90] After reconfirming various Jewish privileges in Alexandria and thus resolving tensions in the city, the Roman emperor Claudius (ruled 41–54 CE) warned the city's Jewish inhabitants not to disrupt athletic events and not to "bring in or invite Jews coming

88. Downey notes 30,000 but acknowledges one source says 230,000. Both numbers, as Downey notes, are likely exaggerations, and the whole idea of Phineas sending soldiers is questionable. Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 193, 193n133, 195.

89. My account of this entire episode is drawn from Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 193–194, and Justin Taylor, "Why Were the Disciples," 87, who themselves draw primarily from John Malalas's history.

90. Justin Taylor, "Why Were the Disciples," 88.

from Syria or Egypt," lest he "be forced to conceive grave suspicions."[91]

The emergence of the term "Christian" may well have related to a burgeoning understanding among Roman officials that the sect differed from the larger Jewish community from which it had derived.[92] Tensions between Jewish nonbelievers and believers of Jesus may also have contributed to this understanding. Some scholars have suggested that the Jewish troublemakers from Syria or Egypt about whom Claudius warned Alexandrian citizens may have, in fact, been Christian missionaries.[93] Justin Taylor raises, in addition, the fact that Eusebius's *Chronicle* dates the third year of Gaius, the year of the Antioch riot, to the arrival of Peter in Antioch.[94] Although Taylor doubts the veracity of Peter himself in Antioch at the time, it could well be that Peter could be a stand-in for the "founder[s] of the church at Antioch," that is, for the arrival of Hellenistic Jewish people espousing Jesus as the Christ.[95] If so, the disruption that Gentile involvement in the new sect created, along more importantly with the fact that a subset of Jewish people were espousing a new king and kingdom—indeed, the soon-coming Messianic deliverance of the Jewish people from Rome's domination—was enough to result in riots between the more general Jewish and non-Jewish populations, and that, in turn, was enough to cast suspicion on the sect from Roman authorities.[96] These "Christians," then, came to be seen as "rebels," enemies of the state.[97] Indeed, early non-Christian references to the

91. Taylor, 88.
92. Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 198; Justin Taylor, "Why Were the Disciples," 94; Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 35n81.
93. Justin Taylor, "Why Were the Disciples," 88.
94. Taylor, 90.
95. Taylor, 90, 91.
96. Taylor, 92, 93.
97. Taylor, 93.

term seem to reflect that, as seen in Tacitus's description of Christians as "a class of men, loathed for their vices," and perhaps also in Suetonius's comment that "the Jews constantly made disturbances on the instigation of Chrestus."[98] Even the usage in 1 Peter 4:16, one of only three in the New Testament, is in the context of persecution of the sect ("yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian"), fitting with such an interpretation. The commission of one known for his aptitude at providing comfort, such as Barnabas, to the city might well have played an important role, then, in encouraging a young church that was already facing a degree of harassment.

Luke mentions nothing about the riot, but he does mention famine. In Acts 11:27–30, he notes that a prophet from Jerusalem named Agabus came to Antioch and predicted "that there should be a great dearth throughout the world" (Acts 11:28). Luke places the famine as occurring during the reign of the emperor Claudius (Acts 11:28). The timing of this famine is difficult to pinpoint, but most scholars generally place it sometime between 44 and 47 CE.[99] Part

98. Tacitus, *Annals*, trans. J. Jackson, 15.44, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 5 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1937), https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Tacitus/Annals/15B*.html#44; Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars: Claudius*, trans. J. C. Rolfe, chap. 25, Ancient History Sourcebook, https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/ancient/suet-claudius-rolfe.asp.

99. Kenneth Sperber Gapp, "The Universal Famine under Claudius," *Harvard Theological Review* 28, no. 4 (October 1935): 258–265, Jstor, http://www.jstor.com/stable/1508135, argues for 44–46 or 45–47 CE (see especially p. 260), as does Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 195–196; A. T. Robertson, *Luke the Historian in Light*, 174, argues for 46 CE. *Ellicott's Commentary* places the famine in 45 CE; *Barnes' Notes on the Bible* places it in 45–47 CE; *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary* places the famine in 41 CE; *Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible* favors 44–46 CE. All commentaries can be found at "Acts 11:28," Bible Hub, https://biblehub.com/commentaries/acts/11-28.htm. Eusebius places the famine in the fourth year of Claudius's reign, so 44 CE. Eusebius, *Church History*, 2.1.8.

of the difficulty in determining the precise dates is rooted in the fact that there were in reality numerous famines during the reign of Claudius.[100] While most famines were localized, such scarcity could result in the impression that other parts of the world were also suffering, especially if local officials blamed a commodity shortage on just that rather than taking responsibility for the lack of sufficient imports; in this sense, any local famine could be interpreted as worldwide to local inhabitants.[101] At least four famines are described by ancient historians as occurring during Claudius's reign: two in Rome, one during Claudius's first year and one during his eleventh year; one in Greece around Claudius's ninth year; and the one that particularly affected Judea.[102] It is the last one to which Luke obviously refers.

The Judean famine may have been caused by excess flooding of the Nile River in Egypt in the year 44 or 45

100. *Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*, "Acts 11:28," Bible Hub, lists famines in the first, second, fourth, ninth, and eleventh years of Claudius's reign.

101. Gapp, "Universal Famine under Claudius," 263–264.

102. *Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, "Acts 11:28." Mentions of famine in Rome during Claudius's time are made by Suetonius, "Life of Claudius," sec. 18, in Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars*, trans. J. C. Rolfe, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1914), https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Suetonius/12Caesars/Claudius*.html#ref47, writing in the early second century; Tacitus, *Annals*, 12.43, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 4, https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Tacitus/Annals/12B*.html, also writing in the early second century; and Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, trans. Ernest Cary, 60.11.1, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 7 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1925), https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Cassius_Dio/60*.html, writing in the early third century. Mention of famine in Greece appears in Eusebius's *Chronicle*, from the early fourth century. Orosius, in his *Histories against the Pagans*, from the early fifth century, makes mention of several famines in Rome and Syria. Paulus Orosius, *Histories against the Pagans*, trans. I. W. Raymond, and revised by A. T. Fear, 7.3.6, 7.6.12, and 7.6.17, Attalus, http://attalus.org/translate/orosius7A.html.

CE.[103] As such, it would have affected not only Judea but also Antioch and the rest of the empire, insofar as Egypt was the empire's breadbasket.[104] Failure of local crops in Judea and Syria would have made the famine even more severe.[105] However, Antioch, as a commercial center, had more access to imports of grain than the more remote Judea, which would explain why the Antiochene Christians would lay up store for their Judean brethren, even though both locales were to suffer.[106] Josephus in his *Antiquities of the Jews* testifies to the severity of the famine as it occurred in Judea itself when he notes that the Jewish convert Helena, mother of King Izates of the Parthian kingdom of Adiabene, in northern Mesopotamia, sent "a great quantity of corn" and "a cargo of dried figs" to Judea, because of a famine in which "many people died for want."[107]

Luke notes that Paul and Barnabas were the deliverers of the Antioch church's aid to Judea (Acts 11:30). The timing of this delivery is complicated by the fact that Luke's account compounds four events into the one short passage—the prophecy, the gathering of food, the famine, and the delivery. Each could have occurred in relatively short order, or more likely, the process may have taken place over the course of several years. One thing the distribution of materials to the Judean church demonstrates, however, is the degree to which the Antiochene church was bound to

103. Gapp, "Universal Famine under Claudius," 258–260; Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 195.

104. Hayden Chakra, "Egypt under Roman Rule—Roman Province," About History, August 15, 2021, https://about-history.com/egypt-under-roman-rule-roman-province/.

105. Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 195–196; Orosius, *Histories against the Pagans*, 7.6.12.

106. Gapp, "Universal Famine under Claudius," 260.

107. Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, trans. William Whiston, 20.2.5, Project Gutenberg, gutenberg.org/files/2848/2848-h/2848-h.htm#link20noteref-5.

that of Jerusalem—prophets traveled from the latter to the former, and the former provided relief to the latter.

About the time of these events, Luke tells us in Acts 12:1–3, Herod Agrippa I beheaded James the brother of John and took Peter captive, which means that the events recounted in Acts 11:27–30 occurred sometime around 41–44 CE, the dates of Agrippa's short reign. In other words, the Jerusalem church suffered during this time not only the threat of famine but also renewed persecution by the Jewish ruling authority—this time, touching more than those who were simply Hellenistically inclined; such led to Peter's departure from Jerusalem (Acts 12:17) and perhaps to that of other apostles, who spread the Gospel afresh to other regions of the world but, as of yet, primarily to the Jewish and Israelite diaspora (as per Gal. 2:8 and Matt. 10:5–6).[108]

108. The late second-century writer Clement of Alexandria, in his *Stromata*, claims that Peter said that "the Lord said to the apostles: 'If any one of Israel then, wishes to repent, and by my name to believe in God, his sins shall be forgiven him, after twelve years. Go forth into the world, that no one may say, We have not heard.'" Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata, or Miscellanies*, 6.5, Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/clement-stromata-book6.html. Likewise Eusebius, referencing Apollonius, who was himself referencing Zoticus, cites a tradition in which "the Saviour commanded his apostles not to depart from Jerusalem for twelve years." Eusebius, *Church History*, 5.18.13, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250105.htm. A rather late tradition (at earliest 1098) records the feast of "Dimissio," "Dispersio," or "Divisio Apostolorum" as commemorating the departure of the twelve apostles from Jerusalem some fourteen years after Jesus's death and resurrection—that is, around 42–44 CE (counting the fourteen years inclusively, as per first-century Jewish reckoning, would make it twelve years in contemporary reckoning). Fredirick Holweck, "Dispersion of the Apostles," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 5 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909), New Advent, http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05046a.htm. Paul R. Finch, citing John Wenham's work and referring to the twelve-year tradition, proposes that the Gospel of Matthew "was composed just before that time in preparation for that great mission," with the Epistle of James being written as a kind of preface to the work. Finch, *Beyond Acts*, 311–312, 323, quote on 312.

Peter's journey "to another place" (Acts 12:17) has been the cause of much speculation. One theory, discussed in the next chapter, has him going east, to Mesopotamia.[109] However, yet another theory proposes that Peter went west, first to Antioch, and then on to Rome and possibly even Britain.[110] Both theories lend possibility to the idea

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See also John Wenham, *Redating Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 239. The departure of the apostles from Jerusalem is not explicitly recorded in the New Testament, and there are various theories regarding when it took place. Luke's reference to the apostles at the Acts 15 council some years after James's death could lead one to speculate that the bulk of them did not leave Jerusalem until sometime after that decree. William Steuart McBirnie speculates that the book of Acts itself was, in fact, an instruction manual for the apostles regarding mission work, written around 64 CE, and that their dispersion from Jerusalem only came about near the time of the city's destruction. McBirnie, *Search for the Twelve Apostles*, 40–44. Conversely, the term "apostles," as used in the New Testament, does not always means the twelve or all twelve. Paul refers, for example, to James the brother of Jesus as an apostle (Gal. 1:19), even though he was not one of the twelve; Acts 14:14 references Barnabas and Paul as apostles, neither of whom were of the twelve either. Acts 16:4, further, references the Acts 15 decree as coming from the "apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem," which could be a qualifying phrase noting that only the apostles currently at Jerusalem wrote the decree, not the entire twelve. In Acts 9:27, Luke uses the term "the apostles" to refer only to Peter and James the brother of Jesus, as is made clear by Paul's account of the same event in Galatians 1:18–19. The same Greek word is used to refer to Epaphroditus (Philip. 2:25) and Andronicus and Junia (Rom. 16:7). As such, later references to the apostles in Acts may not be to the twelve or all the twelve, who may well have scattered much earlier.

109. McBirnie, *Search for the Twelve Apostles*, 56–57, 62–63.

110. Chapman, "Evodius"; Finch, *Beyond Acts*, 277, 303–304. Peter's need to stay in Jerusalem for twelve years and departure to Rome are also referenced in the apocryphal late second-century *Acts of Peter*: "Whereas the twelve years which the Lord Christ had enjoined upon him were fulfilled, he showed him a vision after this manner, saying unto him: Peter, that Simon the sorcerer whom thou didst cast out of Judaea, convicting him, hath again come before thee (prevented thee) at Rome. . . . But delay thee not: set forth on the morrow." *The Acts of Peter*, sec. 3 "The Vercelli Acts," chap. 5, in *The Apocryphal New Testament*, trans. and ed. M. R. James (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924),

that Peter may have stopped by Antioch on the way to his eventual destination; such a possibility could be the origin of the idea that Peter served as the official founder of the church at Antioch, as on whatever journey he took, according to this idea, Peter ordained Evodius as the head of the Antioch church.[111] No mention is made of Evodius in the New Testament (a strange omission, given the list of Antiochene teachers in Acts 13:1), and he is little more than a name in any other sources, if he is even noted, drawing into question his historical reality or the reality that Peter served as the first bishop in Antioch; however, if Peter did ordain a bishop in Antioch, it would have been yet another way in which the Jerusalem church demonstrated its authority over the work being done among non-Jewish people in Antioch, especially since Evodius's name suggests he was not Jewish or, at the least, that he was part of the Hellenistic-leaning Jewish diaspora.[112]

Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/actspeter.html.

111. "Now concerning those bishops which have been ordained in our lifetime . . . Of Antioch, Euodius, ordained by me Peter." *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, ed. James Donaldson, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 7: *Fathers of the Third and Fourth Centuries: Lactantius, Venantius, Asterius, Victorinus, Dionysisus, Apostolic Teaching and Constitutions, Homily and Liturgies*, ed. Philip Schaff (1885), Christian Ethereal Library, 7.4.46, https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf07/anf07.ix.viii.iv.html. See also Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.22; McBirnie, *Search for the Twelve Apostles*, 54–56, esp. 56; Finch, *Beyond Acts*, 277; Henry Wace, "Evodius, Bishop of Antioch," in *A Dictionary of Early Christian Biography*, ed. Henry Wace and William C. Piercy (London: John Murray, 1911; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), https://www.studylight.org/dictionaries/eng/hwd/e/evodius-bishop-of-antioch.html.

112. Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 284. Numerous possibilities include the following: that Evodius was dislodged from some lists of Antiochene bishops to make room for Peter as the first; that he was ordained not by Peter but chosen by a local church council; or that he didn't exist at all. Downey, 284–285. One problem with the idea of Peter ordaining Evodius is the fact that the dates suggested by Eusebius place his ordination a few years after Peter's supposed departure from

Paul and Barnabas's Missionary Journeys and the Problem of Non-Jewish Converts

Barnabas and Paul's return to Antioch (Acts 12:25) occasioned a while later a similar missionary spirit among the Antiochenes. Although the two were one of many seen as leaders within the Antioch church (Acts 13:1), their trip to Jerusalem likely helped those leaders come to the decision that God was working something special in them. And so it was that the Antioch church began its own mission work, this time to Cyprus, as well as to south-central Asia Minor. In Cyprus, Barnabas and Paul retread ground that had already been seeded by those who had scattered after the death of Stephen (Acts 11:19). Luke notes that they began their preaching in synagogues and does not mention a mission to non-Jewish people (Acts 13:5), though such is quite likely, given that preaching to Gentiles had already occurred in Antioch some time before (Acts 11:21); indeed, the mission to the Gentiles, with the Jerusalem- and now Antioch-endorsed Cypriot Barnabas in place, may have been a main reason for a return to the island. By the time Barnabas and Paul reached Antioch of Pisidia in Asia Minor, however, the mission to non-Jewish people becomes very clear in Luke's account. "It was necessary," Paul tells the Jewish nonbelievers, "that the word of God should first

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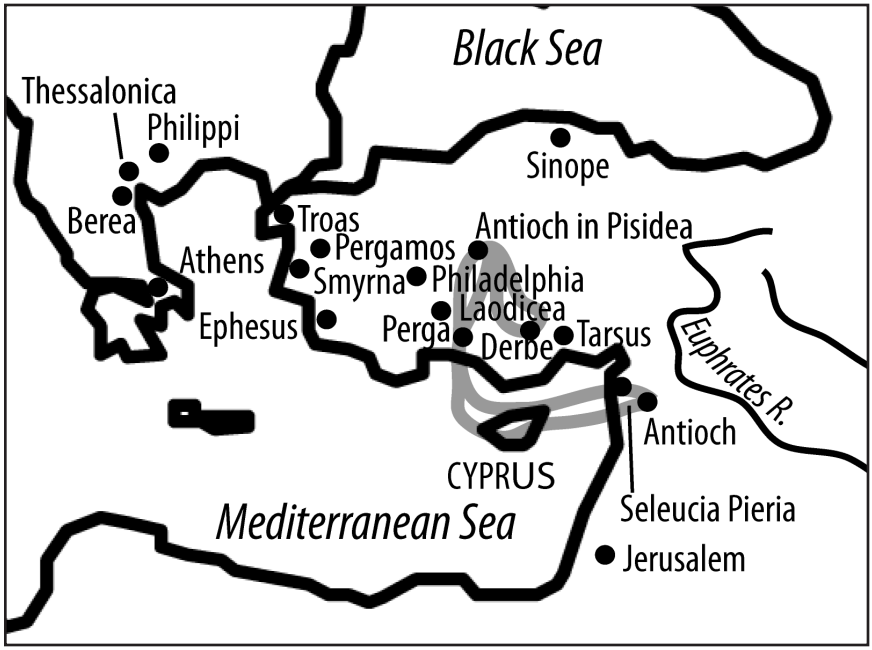
Antioch, meaning that either Peter did not do the ordaining or that the ordination occurred many years after Peter's departure to "another place," on a later Petristic visit. Wace, "Evodius, Bishop of Antioch." Interestingly, the tenth-century Byzantine encyclopedia *The Suda* ties the ordination of Evodius to the change of name of the followers of Jesus in Antioch from "Nazarenes" or "Galileans" to "Christians," suggesting that the church in the area either had become majority Gentile or that the Jewish and non-Jewish groups split. Justin Taylor, "Why Were the Disciples," 91. Differing groups is a hypothesis advanced by Downey in his *History of Antioch in Syria*, 277.

have been spoken to you, but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46).

This turn to the Gentiles, however, would inspire much trouble in the church in the soon-coming years. Although Barnabas and Paul would return to Antioch of Syria to rehearse to the church that had sent them "all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door unto the Gentiles" (Acts 14:27), and although the Jerusalem church had sent Barnabas to Antioch with an eye on the mission to the Gentiles that was clearly gaining adherents, the implications of that mission had not been fully digested. Troubles with Jewish authorities in Jerusalem, as well as abroad (after all, Acts 14:19 notes Paul as having been stoned on his first missionary trip), likely created a degree of uncertainly and timidity on the part of Jewish believers within the nascent church.[113] "They constrain you to be circumcised," Paul wrote of a strict Jewish party he opposed in Galatia, "only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ" (Gal. 6:12). In addition, increasing Roman restrictions on Jewish privileges within Jerusalem would have meant that the Jerusalem church was under pressure to conform more fully to stricter Jewish practices as a means of maintaining unity with the local Jewish community and its nationalistic cause.[114] This led to the sundering of the believers into various factions, even though Peter had earlier made plain the work that God was doing among those who were not Jewish, a decision to which more conservative factions among the believers had at least given assent by their silence (Acts 11:17–18). Even so, the question still remained as to what exactly the con-

113. Nicholas Taylor, *Paul, Antioch, and Jerusalem*, 121, 130–131, 155. See also 1 Thess. 2:12–14.

114. Slee, *Church in Antioch*, 33; Nicholas Taylor, *Paul, Antioch, and Jerusalem*, 98.



Paul's first missionary journey

version of Gentiles to this new way of life meant for them in terms of practical everyday interaction with the Jewish segment of the church.

These factions, one standard reading goes, essentially broke into four main clusters: an ultraconservative group opposed to all interaction with non-Jewish people unless those people converted fully to the strictest Jewish practices, including the oral law said to have been set out by Moses; a conservative group, of which James and Peter were part, who insisted the non-Jewish people take on certain Jewish practices, especially regarding dietary restrictions, but need not become circumcised; a liberal group, of which Paul was part, who enjoined neither circumcision nor dietary restrictions on non-Jewish converts; and an ultraliberal faction who enjoined no Jewish practices at all, including observance of the Jewish festivals, seeing them

as holding no lingering significance.[115] Such an interpretation essentially sees James the brother of Jesus and Peter on one side of the church and Paul on another; indeed, some scholars even go so far as to lump all the conservatives and all the liberals together such that Paul becomes a "'law-free' radical" and Peter and James men who revert to "Jewish particularism."[116] "This interpretation misreads all parties," historian Paula Fredriksen notes. "From the beginning—before Paul was even involved—the movement had admitted gentiles without requiring them to be circumcised. James, Peter, and John all affirmed that position. . . . But these gentiles were responsible for maintaining some specifically Jewish behaviors. . . . All the apostles, Paul included, were agreed on this."[117] Indeed, what even constituted proper Jewish practice at this time was to some extent open for debate, as evidenced by the martyrdoms of Stephen and Jesus and the witness of Josephus in his *Antiquities* regarding the existence of various Jewish sects.[118] All observant Jews might agree on the value of the Torah but have different views of it.[119] The real struggle, if we are to take Acts as our authority, appears not to have been between the policies of the Antioch church and the Jerusalem church, or between those of Paul and Peter, but between a sector of the church that resided in Judea that maintained strong ties to the Jewish sect of the Pharisees that was dominant in the region and the rest of the church,[120] such that the latter at times felt beholden to the former in order to maintain peace and avoid trouble.

115. Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 2–6; Crowe, *From Jerusalem to Antioch*, 103.

116. Paula Fredriksen, *When Christians Were Jews: The First Generation* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2018), 187–188; Nicholas Taylor, *Paul, Antioch, and Jerusalem*, 13.

117. Fredriksen, *When Christians Were Jews*, 188.

118. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.1.

119. Magnus Zetterholm, *Formation of Christianity in Antioch*, 56.

120. Zetterholm, 65.

Issues with the Jewish Pharisaical sect are evident throughout the Gospel accounts and suggest that its influence was strong in Jesus's day throughout Judea and even Galilee, well before the start of the church that was to bear his name. Time and again, Jesus would contrast the strictures added by Pharisaically minded Jews to what the Old Testament actually prescribed, with the perhaps most explicit and lengthy example of this being Jesus's recitation of woes against the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23. Significantly, many of the interactions recorded between Jesus and the Pharisees come at meals, where the differences of view are on full display. One of the best examples of this appears in Luke 11:37–40: "And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him: and he went in, and sat down to meat. And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner. And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also?" (Another particularly pertinent example appears in Matt. 15:1–20 and Mark 7:1–23.)

Proper ritualistic washings before a meal were not the Pharisees' only concern. One of the strictures many of the group maintained rendered eating with non-Jewish people inappropriate—or, indeed, with anyone, including Jewish people, who did not follow similar meal customs. (One need only think, for example, of the Pharisees' condemnation, in Matthew 9:10–11, Mark 2:15–16, and Luke 5:30, of Jesus eating with "publicans and sinners.") In other words, actual meal practices among Jewish people were "not uniform," and as Justin Taylor notes, "only the most rigorous forms of Jewish observance exploded all social intercourse with Gentiles."[121]

121. Nicholas Taylor, *Paul, Antioch, and Jerusalem*, 126.

Yet the influence of such forms appears to have been ascendant during the time of Jesus and the early church, through into the second century. Josephus, writing in the second century, noted that although "the Pharisees have delivered to the people a great many observances by succession from their fathers, which are not written in the laws of Moses, . . . the Pharisees have the multitude on their side."[122] Jesus's accusation that the Pharisees "compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves" (Matt. 23:15) seems a bit strange in the context of non-Jewish converts if the Pharisees were focused so heavily on distinguishing Jewish people from non-Jewish. Such a statement seems much clearer, however, when one considers that Pharisaical proselytizing was not as much an attempt to convert Gentiles to Jewish ways as it was to convert Jews to Pharisaic ways.[123] The rules surrounding "table fellowship"—"the gathering together [of Pharisees and their invitees] to eat properly tithed food in

122. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 13.10.6, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2848/2848-h/2848-h.htm#link132HCH0010.

123. This is not to say that the Jews were not themselves, to an extent, a conversionist sect at the time. "Instead of being absorbed by the pagan religions," George Holley Gilbert notes of the Jews of the diaspora, "they carried on in the Roman period a most zealous and successful propaganda." He goes on to note several examples of conversions in kingly households and, if we are to believe the many accounts in Acts, rightly observes that "in the synagogues of the Dispersion, where Paul preached, there was always a gentile contingent." George Holley Gilbert, "The Hellenization of the Jews between 334 BC and 70 AD," *American Journal of Theology* 13, no. 4 (October 1909): 531. Shaye J. D. Cohen notes that while "several writers from the city of Rome refer to the eagerness of the Jews to win gentiles to their side[, t]here is not evidence for an *organized* Jewish mission to the gentiles." Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 56–57. Most likely, Jewish conversion of non-Jewish people to the religion was a mostly passive exercise until the advent of Christianity, which would in part explain the difficulties the early church had once it began actively pursuing such a mission.

a state of ritual purity, and the procedures for acquiring food and maintaining households or other spaces fit for such gatherings"—were one of the main ways to accomplish this.[124] Jonathan D. Brumberg-Kraus, in an article on the Pharisaic proselytizing, explains well how seemingly opposing gestures—separation and conversion—could be joined in the same act:

> The very behaviors of tithing, purity laws, and table fellowship that separated a Pharisee from other Jews were the same behaviors that engaged other Jews in these behaviors. Tithing and the observance of purity rules not only "cemented in-group commitment in the ritual context" of table fellowship, that is, promoted the group's separatist consciousness. Members of the in-group also "upheld them outside the ritual context" in ways that necessarily engaged non-Pharisees to assume the same behaviors. In other words, they were a means of "outreach."[125]

Adoption of Pharisaic customs, thus, even if one was not a strict believer in Pharisaic ways, would allow one to have business or social dealings with others who would otherwise be off limits. In other words, non-Pharisees essentially became Pharisees through the customs to which they subjected themselves in order to have relations with those who were Pharisees.[126]

Such would have, in turn, made any meal with someone who was not even Jewish even more problematic, as Michelle Slee describes:

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124. Jonathan D. Brumberg-Kraus, "Were the Pharisees a Conversionist Sect? Table Fellowship as a Strategy of Conversion," 2002, http://www.academia.edu/5834767/Were_the_Pharisees_a_Conversionist_Sect, 1.

125. Brumberg-Kraus, 12.

126. Brumberg-Kraus, 17.

> For Jewish-Gentile tablefellowship to take place in a *Gentile* home the Jews would have had to bring their own food which had no association with idolatry, they would have had to have it served to them by Jewish servants (or would have had to serve it themselves), and they would have had to sit apart from their Gentile companions in order to frustrate any attempt by the Gentile to contaminate the food, wine and vessels with idolatry. If the meal was taking place in a *Jewish* home, these precautions would *still* have been necessary, since even if the food and drink had no previous association with idolatry the mere fact the Gentiles were in the same room (and thus possibly touching the food or the wine or the vessels in which they were held while simultaneously offering a dedication to a pagan deity), meant that the threat of idolatry was always present.[127]

We see Pharisaic influence already at work on the young church at the very first instance Acts recalls of a Gentile taking on the faith. It is "they that were of the circumcision" who contend with Peter on the matter (Acts 11:2). Years later, as the number of non-Jewish people came to forge a larger segment of the church in Antioch and as that church began to spread its message among Gentiles elsewhere, this same faction would come to Antioch to tell believers that "except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1). The phrase "after the manner of Moses" is a key to understanding the issue involved here. Although circumcision was something gen-

127. Slee, *Church in Antioch*, 20. Unfortunately, Slee fails to take into account the varying views of Jewish practice at the time, especially in the diaspora, and thus comes to the conclusion that "most Jews in our period would not have tolerated Jewish-Gentile tablefellowship." Slee, 20.

erally looked down upon in western Greco-Roman society, it had long been practiced among many cultures, beyond the Jews, in the eastern part of the empire.[128] As such, actual circumcision would not have even been an issue for many converts. Rather, Jewish thinkers of the "circumcision party" likely wanted non-Jewish men not only to be circumcised but to be circumcised according to the prescribed Pharisaic regulations (as even today those Jewish children who are secularly circumcised in a hospital must

128. Greco-Roman abhorrence of circumcision is well documented; the Roman emperor Hadrian even forbade the practice in 132 CE. A summary of Greco-Roman views can be found in Frederick M. Hodges, "The Ideal Prepuce in Ancient Greece and Rome: Male Genital Aesthetics and Their Relation to *Lipodermos*, Circumcision, Foreskin Restoration, and the *Kynodesme*," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 75 (Fall 2001): 375–405, The Circumcision Reference Library, http://www.cirp.org/library/history/hodges2/. On Hadrian's ban, see Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 462. Among cultures in the near East that practiced circumcision were the Egyptians and Phoenicians, though the Egyptian practice typically cut less of the foreskin than that of the Jewish (and may be the reason the Israelites were told in Joshua 5:2, to "circumcise again" their children upon entering the Promised Land). On Near Eastern circumcision, see James Tabor, "Egyptian Circumcision before the Time of Abraham," *Taborblog: Religion Matters from the Bible to the Modern World*, February 2, 2017, https://jamestabor.com/egyptian-circumcision-before-the-time-of-abraham/; and Caleb Strom, "The Cutting Truth about Circumcision: It Was All about Rites and Religion," Ancient Origins: Reconstructing the Story of Humanity's Past, July 19, 2018, https://www.ancient-origins.net/history-ancient-traditions/history-circumcision-0010398. Although many hypothesize that the practice originated with Abraham and the Hebrews (Gen. 17:10–14) and spread from Israel south and north, there is evidence that the practice was already common in northern Syria, in the region where Antioch would eventually be built, long before Hebrews began practicing it, and spread south from there. See Jack M. Sasson, "Circumcision in the Ancient Near East," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 85, no. 4 (1966): 473–476, Jstor, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3264032. On the history of circumcision more generally, see Peter Charles Remondino, *History of Circumcision from the Earliest Times to the Present* (Philadelphia: F. A. Davis, 1891), Project Gutenberg, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23135/23135-h/23135-h.html; see especially chaps. 1–6 for ancient practice.

pass through a ceremony in which yet more blood is drawn to confirm that circumcision).[129] Indeed, Luke, later in the same chapter, ties the circumcision party in with "certain of the sect of the Pharisees" (Acts 15:5).[130]

Paul's account in Galatians 2 regarding some of the same matters makes clear the degree to which the Pharisaical faction had proven challenging for the Jerusalem leadership to manage. In that chapter, circumcision and meal customs are lumped together, as if adherence to strictures involving these two very different things are related. Peter, Paul notes, who otherwise lived "after manner of the Gentiles" (no doubt, not in regard to his obviously Jewish circumcision but with regard to meal practices) was compelled to withdraw from a meal with them when "certain came from James" arrived, "fearing them which were of the circumcision" (Gal. 2:14, 12); other Jewish believers from Jerusalem withdrew also—and even, Paul notes, his Antiochene cohort Barnabas (Gal. 2:13).

Whether this event occurred before the conference Luke recounts in Acts 15 or after can affect one's interpretation of the relationship Paul had with the Jerusalem and Antiochene churches,[131] though it doesn't necessarily need to. Many scholars see the Galatians 2:11–14 passage as a showdown between Paul and the rest of the Jewish element of the church, with Peter, Jerusalem, and even Antioch eventually siding against Paul, such that he would then go on to forge his own Gentile-focused mission, one

129. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 274–275.

130. The early church's policy regarding the lack of necessity for the circumcision of non-Jewish converts may not have even fallen out of line with more lenient Jewish practice outside Judea. "There is some evidence that in the Diaspora at least," Michelle Slee notes, "it was possible for a male to convert to Judaism *without* undergoing the rite of circumcision. A number of texts imply that some Jewish groups advocated immersion instead of circumcision as the rite of entry into the Jewish community." Slee, *Church in Antioch*, 27.

131. Nicholas Taylor, *Paul, Antioch, and Jerusalem*, 23.

alienated from the other apostles.[132] "Paul lost the argument," John P. Meier succinctly puts it.[133] A subset of this position argues that although Peter and James initially agreed with Paul on the manner in which non-Jewish persons should be integrated into the faith, as denoted in Acts 15 and Galatians 2:7–10, they later, in Galatians 2:11–14, rescinded this agreement,[134] a position that is difficult to sustain given that James reconfirms the Acts 15 decision in Acts 21:25. One problem with such approaches is that they call into question why so many of Paul's writings, or, conversely, of the other apostles' writings, are preserved insofar as the church would seem then to have divided fairly early into a heavily Jewish faction and an anti-Jewish one, leaving one to wonder why either side of the church would have bothered to preserve the writings of the other. Nicholas Taylor, in his book on the subject, tries to take a middle approach, arguing that Paul early on was beholden to Jerusalem; then lost the support of Barnabas and Antioch and forged his own mission, centered around authority he saw as coming directly from God but at one with the Jerusalem authority in opposing the strict Pharisaic faction belittling the church in Galatia; then finally reconciling with Jerusalem but never again having an "active relationship" with the main body.[135] In trying to reconcile the two sides of the

132. Taylor, 137; Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 39; Meeks and Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch*, 17.

133. Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 39.

134. Slee, *Church in Antioch*, 46.

135. Nicholas Taylor, *Paul, Antioch, and Jerusalem*. This summary of Taylor's work finds its most succinct expression on pages 180 and 204–205. Elements of Taylor's interpretation certainly are buoyed by Paul's tone in Galatians 2:9, when he notes that James, Peter, and John "seemed to be pillars," which would seem to indicate a lack of respect by Paul and a momentary degree of antagonism between the two parties, but translation here can make a large difference. Some translations render this more neutrally: "the acknowledged pillars of the community" (Complete Jewish Bible), "recognized as pillars" (Holman Christian Standard Bible), "those esteemed as pillars" (New Interna-

church, others have gone so far as to claim that biblical Cephas and Peter are not even the same person but rather that Cephas was a Judaizer, a position that had some followers as early as the second century.[136]

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tional Version), or "who were acknowledged pillars" (New Revised Standard Version). Nevertheless, Paul certainly does emphasize that the gospel he preaches "is not after man, for [he] neither received it of man, neither was [he] taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:11–12). Taylor's interpretation, however, is colored by his acceptance of the scholarly opinion that the apostolic decree issued in Acts 15:19–20 and 23–39 was a later invention inserted into Luke's account of the conference, such that Paul was not privy to it. Taylor, 56, 96.

136. James Likoudis, "Were the Apostle Peter and Cephas of Antioch the Same Person?," James Likoudis's blog, http://www.jameslikoudispage.com/Doctrine/cephas.htm; "Cephas Might Not Be the Apostle PETER in Gal. 2:14 but Another Cephas," *Bjorkbloggen*, https://bjorkbloggen.com/2012/04/05/cephas-might-not-be-the-apostle-peter-in-gal-214-but-another-cephas/; Bart D. Ehrman, "Cephas and Peter," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 109, no. 3 (1990): 463–474, Jstor, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3267052; Bart D. Ehrman, "Some Evidence That Cephas and Peter WERE Two Different People," *Bart Ehrman Blog: The History and Literature of Early Christianity*, July 31, 2021, https://ehrmanblog.org/some-evidence-that-cephas-and-peter-were-two-different-people/. Some basic elements of the argument run this way: Matthew always uses "Peter"; Paul uses "Peter" and "Cephas" in distinctive ways in Galatians, distinguishing between the two, and always uses "Cephas" in 1 Corinthians. Cephas's actions in Galatians, separating himself from the Gentiles, are out of character for the Peter of Acts, who consistently defends the Gentile mission, and Paul's use of the wording "seemed to be pillars" with regard to James, Cephas, and John in Galatians 2:9 shows that he was not referring to the "true" pillars of the Jerusalem church in reference to the incident. Further, 1 Corinthians 15:5 separates Cephas from the twelve apostles in the list of people who saw the postresurrection Christ, and he is listed last in 1 Corinthians 1:12 and 3:22 among Paul and Apollos, something that would not have been true of Peter, the supposed head apostle (one should note, however, that Christ is actually listed last in 1 Cor. 1:12, which calls into question the concept that these lists are in order of priority). Other references to Cephas as Peter in scripture (John 1:42, Gal. 1:8) are dismissed as copyist errors or later terminology with which recipients of Paul's letters would not have been familiar (i.e., Greeks would have only known Peter as Peter and Cephas as Cephas). Early proponents of this position included

Such theories are not essential to our understanding of the events if we simply reflect on the fact that Peter, James, and Barnabas were taking a pragmatic position in an attempt to keep peace while Paul was taking an idealistic one—but one that he, too, at times compromised on, as he did when agreeing to join in purification rites with four other Jews while visiting Jerusalem some years later (Acts 21:23–26).[137] Indeed, it is Paul who claimed to the Corinthians, "Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law" (1 Cor. 9:20–21), and who likewise, at convenient times, would claim still, long after his conversion, to be a Pharisee (see, for example, Acts 23:6). Since Paul was spending most of his time in Antioch and other places less connected to Judea, he quite possibly at the time that Peter visited Antioch had less at stake, in terms of making peace with those who

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the second-century Clement of Alexandria and perhaps Eusebius, who notes, citing Clement's *Hypotyposes*, book 5, "Cephas was one of the seventy disciples, a man who bore the same name as the apostle Peter, and the one concerning whom Paul says, 'When Cephas came to Antioch I withstood him to his face.'" Eusebius, *Church History*, 1.12.2, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250101.htm. The second-century *Epistula Apostolorum* likewise distinguishes between Cephas, one of the seventy, and Peter, one of the twelve. *The Epistula Apostolorum*, in *The Apocryphal New Testament*, trans. and ed. Montague Rhode James (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), 485–503, Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/apostolorum.html; dating from introduction at Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/apostolorum.html, and Ehrman, "Cephas and Peter," 463. Jerome, in his commentary on Galatians, also notes that the belief existed among some at his time, though he is doubtful of its accuracy. Jerome, *Commentary on Galatians*, trans. Andrew Cain (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 2.11–13 (pp. 108–109).

137. Nicholas Taylor, *Paul, Antioch, and Jerusalem*, 135–136.

were stringent about Pharisaic legal strictures, than those who were regularly returning to Jerusalem. Barnabas, by contrast, may have been persuaded to separate precisely because, although he was spending most of his time in Antioch, he still had to return to Jerusalem regularly for Levitical duties.

While some scholars see all the incidents in Galatians 2 as preceding the conference that Luke recounts in Acts 15, most scholars take the position that the events in Galatians 2 fall into two parts, one (Gal. 2:2–10) either preceding or paralleling the meeting in Acts 15 and one following the meeting (Gal. 2:11–14).[138] If all the events in Galatians 2 precede the Acts 15 meeting, it was Peter's actions, in removing himself from fellowship with non-Jewish diners, that precipitated the Jerusalem conference. If the events are in fact split in two, then Paul was reacting in Galatians 2:11–14 to Peter's failure to uphold a concrete decision that had already been made. Either way, unless one takes the position that Peter and James later rescinded their position with regard to the integration of non-Jewish converts into the church, neither Acts 15 nor Galatians 2 represent a substantive change in the status of non-Jewish peoples within the church. Rather, Acts 15 becomes merely a restatement of the church's earlier position, as set out after Cornelius's conversion, with some specifications regarding how to manage particular social interactions, specifications with which such converts would have already been familiar since "for Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day" (Acts 15:21).

In the most common reading of the events in Acts 15 and Galatians 2, after the Judeans came to Antioch, Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem and met "privately [with] them which were of reputation" (Gal. 2:2)—that is, the

138. Taylor, 123.

"apostles and elders" (Acts 15:4, 6, 22)—to reconfirm the message they had been preaching to the Gentiles. Those with whom he conferred "added nothing to" what they already knew (Gal. 2:6; Acts 15:7–9, 14). Rather, once again, Barnabas and Paul's work among the Gentiles was reconfirmed (Gal. 2:8–9, Acts 15:19). The Jerusalem leadership, in turn, opted to write a letter "unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia" (Acts 15:24) like so:

> Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment: It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well. (Acts 15:24–29)

The letter shows that the issues at stake in Acts 15 were not just whether non-Jewish men needed to undergo circumcision in order to "be saved" (Acts 15:1) but, more important, whether all non-Jewish believers needed to keep "the law." The reference to the law here, however, is almost certainly to Pharisaic interpretations of that law and, by extension, to the ability of non-Jewish persons to fully participate in, and fellowship with, the community of the followers of Jesus. We know this, in part, because

James makes explicit reference to the non-Jewish followers meeting with their Jewish counterparts "in the synagogues every sabbath day" to hear "Moses"—that is, readings from the Torah (Acts 15:21); the Torah itself, as such, was not under question but rather what constituted that Torah (just the written, or the written and the oral). An allusion to the Sabbath and synagogue would have made little sense if non-Jewish members had instituted their own worship location, day, and/or times, as the issue of such people intermixing with Jews proper would never have arisen. That the ability to maintain joint fellowship, without Gentiles taking on a fully Jewish conversion, was a major focus is further supported by the actions of Peter and others not "of the circumcision" party come from Jerusalem who separated themselves from the non-Jewish believers, at meal, after the "circumcision" party arrived in Galatians 2. Beyond that, of the four items from the Moses's written law (abstaining from meat offered to idols, blood, and things strangled, as well as fornication), three had to do with food regulations, suggesting that meal fellowship was particularly important to the circumcision party. The leadership, in essence, reaffirmed that the only food laws non-Jewish persons need apply were those explicitly denoted in the written law. Finally, when fornication is added to the list of food regulations, it becomes apparent that all the practices the leadership chose to emphasize had to do with customs associated with religions from which Gentile followers would have come and that would, in turn, have meant such followers could not associate, not only with other Jewish people, but also with the Christian sect more generally, insofar as both insisted on fidelity to the one true God alone.[139]

139. Karin Hedner Zetterholm views the letter as essentially a restatement of the Holiness Code denoted in Leviticus 17–18. Zetterholm, "Jewish-Behaving Gentiles and the Emergence of a Jewish Rab-

The degree to which sexual services played a role in ancient non-Jewish religions has been contested in modern scholarship, but there is little doubt that on the whole Roman society had much looser sexual mores than its Jewish counterpart.[140] For the Jewish people, the link between sexual matters and religious practice in the ancient world, particularly in connection to prostitution, hearkened back to multiple Old Testament warnings against and curses for such integration (see, for example, Deut. 23:17–18; 1 Kings 14:24, 22:46; and 2 Kings 23:7). Nearer in time to the start of the Christian church were the observations of the first-century BCE Greek geographer Strabo, who included many examples of such practices. Among the Babylonians, for example, he writes, "in accordance with a certain oracle all the Babylonian women have a custom of having intercourse with a foreigner, the women going to a temple of Aphrodite with a great retinue and crowd; and each woman is wreathed with a cord round her head. The man who approaches a woman takes her far away from the sacred precinct, and then has intercourse with her; and the money is considered sacred to Aphrodite."[141] He claims that in Corinth there were more than one thousand courtesans

binic Identity," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (2018): 321, doi: 10.1628/jsq-2018-0017.

140. Matthias Schulz, "Sex in the Service of Aphrodite: Did Prostitution Really Exist in the Temples of Antiquity," *Spiegel Online*, March 26, 2010, https://www.spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/sex-in-the-service-of-aphrodite-did-prostitution-really-exist-in-the-temples-of-antiquity-a-685716.html, lays out the current scholarly debate, largely siding with the skeptics. Stephanie Lynn Budin, in her *The Myth of Sacred Prostitution in Antiquity* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2008), goes so far as to contend that there never was any such thing as sacred prostitution. For a comparison of sexual mores generally, see Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 274–275, 281–284, 294–295.

141. Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, 16.1.20, Loeb Classical Library Edition, 1932, http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Strabo/16A*.html.

dedicated to the same goddess.[142] He writes that in Thebes in Egypt in worship of Zeus, "they dedicate a maiden of greatest beauty and most illustrious family (such maidens are called 'pallades' by the Greeks); and she prostitutes herself, and cohabits with whatever men she wishes until the natural cleansing of her body takes place; and after her cleansing she is given in marriage to a man; but before she is married, after the time of her prostitution, a rite of mourning is celebrated for her."[143] The Armenians, he denotes, built temples in honor of the goddess Anaitis, to whom "the most illustrious men of the tribe actually consecrate to her their daughters while maidens; and it is the custom for these first to be prostituted in the temple of the goddess for a long time and after this to be given in marriage; and no one disdains to live in wedlock with such a woman."[144]

Although many modern scholars question the accuracy of these accounts, and others like them, by other classical-age authors, the fact that there was some sort of connection between sexual expression and the worship of ancient goddesses is documented in enough early sources, even if perhaps exaggerated, that it would have been of concern to the early church with a continuing link to the Jewish faith.[145] Even in Roman times, the goddess Venus was re-

142. Strabo, *Geography of Strabo*, 8.6.20, http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Strabo/8F*.html.

143. Strabo, *Geography of Strabo*, 17.1.46, http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Strabo/17A3*.html.

144. Strabo, *Geography of Strabo*, 11.14.16, http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Strabo/11N*.html.

145. Potential problems with Strabo's accounts, the historian Stephanie Budin notes, include the fact that they derive from the writings of such authors as Herodotus rather than Strabo's own witness and fall prey to propaganda meant to show the superiority of Greek culture; that the accounts are anachronistic misunderstandings on Strabo's part of the cultures he writes about; or that the accounts have been mistranslated or misunderstood by his readers, such that the "sacred prostitutes" we read of in translation are simply cultic function-

garded as a protector of sex workers, while worshippers of the goddess Bona Dea were strictly female and known for their licentiousness; the goddess Isis, derived from her predecessor the whore-goddess Ishtar, also saw a growing slate of followers in the Roman Empire, though worship of her in Roman times was apparently quite staid.[146] Indeed, even if prostitution was not explicitly part of the worship of such deities, the connection between sex and the religions based around them were well established in the form of traditions involving fertility passed down from Mesopotamian and Egyptian societies into the Greek and Roman.[147] Idols of Asherah, a Canaanite fertility goddess, featured a nude, sometimes pregnant, woman with exaggerated breasts, and her cult transformed into those of the Greco-Roman fertility goddesses of Artemis and Aphrodite.[148] Passion plays focused on the agricultural goddess Demeter's search for her daughter Persephone, whose disappearance into the Underworld caused Demeter to burn

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aries in Strabo's original language. See chapter 6, "Strabo, Confused and Misunderstood," in Budin, *Myth of Sacred Prostitution*.

146. Nickie Roberts, *Whores in History: Prostitution in Western Society* (London: HarperCollins, 1992), 45–46; Hurtado, *Destroyer of the Gods*, 85; Dorothy I. Sly, *Philo's Alexandria*, quoting Tran Tam Tinh (New York: Routledge, 1996), 115.

147. Roberts, *Whores in History*, 7. Indeed, even Budin in her *Myth of Sacred Prostitution* admits to a connection between Mesopotamian religion and sex; her issue is with the concept that prostitution was involved, for prostitution involves an "exchange of sex for something else of value," whereas rituals of the faith such as the sacred marriage ceremony were between "prescribed personnel (priest and priestess) to represent the union of god and his consort" and may well not have even involved sex except in a theoretical sense. Budin, 17, quoting J. Miner, "Courtesan, Concubine, Whore: Apollodorus' Deliberate Use of Terms for Prostitutes," *American Journal of Philology* 124 (2003): 30, and E. J. Fisher, "Cultic Prostitution: A Reassessment," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 6 (1976): 230. See also Budin, 22.

148. Ray Vander Laan, "Fertility Cults of Canaan," That the World May Know, https://www.thattheworldmayknow.com/fertility-cults-of-canaan.

all the crops and whose return also brought with it the return of seed, represented by wheat.[149] Lupercalia, celebrated in Rome on February 15, what we now know as Valentine's Day, honored the Roman fertility god Lupercus and the supposed she-wolf who rescued the two founders of Rome, Romulus and Remus. The festival featured the sacrifice of goats, whose hides were then cut into strips and used to whip women that they might become fertile.[150] Festivals for the Greek fertility god Dionysus featured giant phalluses alongside heavy drinking.[151] And in Corinth, to which Paul wrote specifically about prostitution, a "special festival of Aphrodite for prostitutes," as Robert M. Grant notes, may not strictly count as sacred prostitution but still evokes the idea of "prostitution especially sanctioned by a goddess."[152]

More generally, many a Gentile man would have had to contend with social norms that placed sex as a recreational pursuit, wherein slaves were often turned into prostitutes, such that "sexual restraint . . . was the exception rather than the rule."[153] The historian Nickie Roberts

149. Ishtar Babilu Dinger, "The Sacred Sex and Death Rites of the Ancient Mystery Groves," *Ancient Origins: Reconstructing the Story of Humanity's Past*, October 9, 2014, https://www.ancient-origins.net/myths-legends/sacred-sex-and-death-rites-ancient-mystery-groves-002186. For different ancient accounts of the myth, see "Demeter Myths 1," Theoi Greek Mythology, https://www.theoi.com/Olympios/DemeterMyths.html#Apollodorus.

150. "Lupercalia," History.com, August 21, 2018, https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-rome/lupercalia.

151. Jeffrey Hays, "Ancient Greek Religion and Mystery Cults: Ancient Greek Religion," Facts and Details, 2012, "Wild Dionysus Festivals" section, http://factsanddetails.com/world/cat55/sub350/item2319.html.

152. Robert M. Grant, *Gods and the One God*, 24.

153. Roberts, *Whores in History*, 13, 35, quote on 38; Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 281–282; Karin Hedner Zetterholm, "Jewish-Behaving Gentiles," 328. The sexual freedoms of women were less often written about and were likely more circumscribed, as various Roman writers expressed disapproval with regard to loose women, espe-

writes of male-only parties in which men "were entertained by groups of dancer-musician-prostitutes—the *auletrides*—who played their flutes, drums and finger cymbals, and performed the sensuous dances of the Middle East. . . . After the entertainment, the men vied with each other for the sexual services of the performers."[154] Add to such social functions the fact that a visit to the grounds of the temple of a pagan deity often brought one into contact with sex workers, whose trade was frequently plied in the vicinity—as well as in or near the Roman baths.[155] An edict, then, against participating in "fornication," as in Acts 15, would have been a command for non-Jewish believers to avoid fellowship with other non-Christians at which such activities played a role.

A similar concern would have been the foundation for the other three items specifically designated as elements of the law to which the non-Jewish believers needed to pay special attention—abstaining from meats offered to idols, from blood, and from things strangled—that is, to take

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cially if married, even if Roman women were allowed more freedoms than other ancient Mediterranean women generally and sometimes expressed it even sexually. Goodman, 283–284; Roberts, 34, 38. Greek women were confined to play the role of either wife or prostitute. Roberts, 16–17.

154. Roberts, *Whores in History*, 29. See also Valeriy A. Alikin, *The Earliest History of the Christian Gathering: Origin, Development, and Content of the Christian Gathering in the First to Third Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 22, https://brill.com/view/title/17341; and Karin Hedner Zetterholm, "Jewish-Behaving Gentiles," 327.

155. Roberts, *Whores in History*, 43. "Prostitutes and their clients tended to favor particular places in the city. A great source of knowledge on this subject is Ovid's *Ars amatoria* where he described in detail two best places to establish a contact—pillared halls, temples, especially those devoted to female deities such as Isis, Pax, Ceres, Bona Dea or Magna Mater, but also Venus and the baths, circuses and theaters and the district Suburra, rather lower-class area." "Prostitution in Ancient Rome," Imperium Romanum, https://www.imperiumromanum.edu.pl/en/roman-society/marriage-and-love-life-in-ancient-rome/prostitution-in-ancient-rome/amp/.

heed of the items one might eat within the social situations Gentiles who had not fully converted to Judaism would have sometimes found themselves. One of the main issues for non-Jewish people who took an interest in the Jewish faith—and by extension the early Christian faith—was the extent to which pagan temples served as a center for the societies from which such peoples came. Much as the synagogue served as the hub of social activities for the Jewish peoples—not only Sabbath services but various gatherings and educational activities—so too did local pagan temples for non-Jewish peoples. Particular gods were often associated with specific families and ethnicities, and the temples often doubled in function as libraries, lecture halls, banks, and community centers.[156] Adopting the Christian faith would have strained friendships and familial relationships, since a given convert would no longer have been able to participate in the various religious rituals associated with one's non-Jewish and non-Christian friends and family; becoming a full convert to the Pharisaic version of the Jewish faith, however, as some Jews wished to ordain upon the Gentile Christians, would have meant giving up such connections completely, since even mere contact in certain social situations, not to mention professional life, would have been forbidden. The church's more liberal position, by contrast, can be summed up in Paul's comments to the Corinthians: "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortion-

156. On synagogue uses, see Chad Spigel, "First Century Synagogues," Bible Odyssey, https://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/places/related-articles/first-century-synagogues; on household and local gods, see Hurtado, *Destroyer of the Gods*, 47, 78; on temple libraries and lecture halls, see Ramsay MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 11; on temple banking, see James W. Ermatinger, *Daily Life in the New Testament* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2008), 78.

ers, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs to go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother [a follower of Jesus] be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat" (1 Cor. 5:9–11).

The pagan social context, as such, was also the reason for Paul's comments regarding food in his letters to the Romans and Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 10:27–28, for example, he writes that "if any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. But if any man say unto you, this is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake." Given that most people did not have homes large enough to host such a simple social function as a shared meal, the pagan temple often became the locus for such an activity.[157] Often, this activity might include a meal in honor to a god in a temple dining room—sometimes, even at the invitation of the god—but it was also possible that a largely secular activity or meal might be hosted at a temple, rented out for the occasion.[158] Even if the occasion were not directly related to the worship of the pagan deity, the food served might well have been derived from a sacrifice to that deity, just as food in the marketplace often derived from such sources, as is made clear in Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 10:25 ("Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake"). Thus, Paul warned his readers in Corinth to be careful about what foods they ate and where: "If any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's

157. MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire*, 36; Larry Hurtado, *At the Origins of Christian Worship: The Context and Character of the Earliest Christian Devotion* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 41; Hurtado, *Destroyer of the Gods*, 60.

158. MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire*, 39.

temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; and through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?" (1 Cor. 8:11–12).[159]

In fact, in certain non-Jewish areas, it may well have been next to impossible to distinguish meat offered to idols from any other kind of meat, leading some to avoid eating meat altogether, which was apparently the case among some in the Roman church (Rom. 14:1–3). "When Christianity gradually took over in antiquity," writes Gunnel Ekroth in an article about meat in ancient Greece, "one of the great challenges was to wrench slaughter and meat-eating away from the pagan cults of which they had formed the core. The killing and butchering of animals had to become 'secular,' or an essential part of men's lives, dining, would have been too intimately linked with pagan religion."[160] "Evidence that Gentile Jesus-followers avoided meat offered to idols," Karin Hedner Zetterholm notes in a piece about non-Jewish converts, "is provided by a statement by Pliny the Younger in the first century, according to which the purchase of sacrificial meat decreased radically as a result of a large number of people joining the Christian movement, but then increased again following his punitive measures against the Christians."[161] The pro-

159. For a full discussion of the passages in 1 Corinthians on dining, see David E. Garland, "The Dispute over Food Sacrificed to Idols (1 Cor 8:1–11:1)," https://www.vanderbilt.edu/AnS/religious_studies/SNTS2002/garland.htm. Garland makes the point that Paul was warning Gentiles away from eating in the temples and away from eating any food that was explicitly affiliated with idolatry.

160. Gunnel Ekroth, "Meat in Ancient Greece: Sacrificial, Sacred or Secular?," *Food and History* 5, no. 1 (2007): 254–255.

161. Karin Hedner Zetterholm, "Jewish-Behaving Gentiles," 328. The passage in question: "The temples, at least, which were once almost deserted, begin now to be frequented; and the sacred rites, after a long intermission, are again revived; while there is a general demand for the victims, which till lately found very few purchasers." Pliny the Younger to the Emperor Trajan, letter 97 in *Letters of Pliny:*

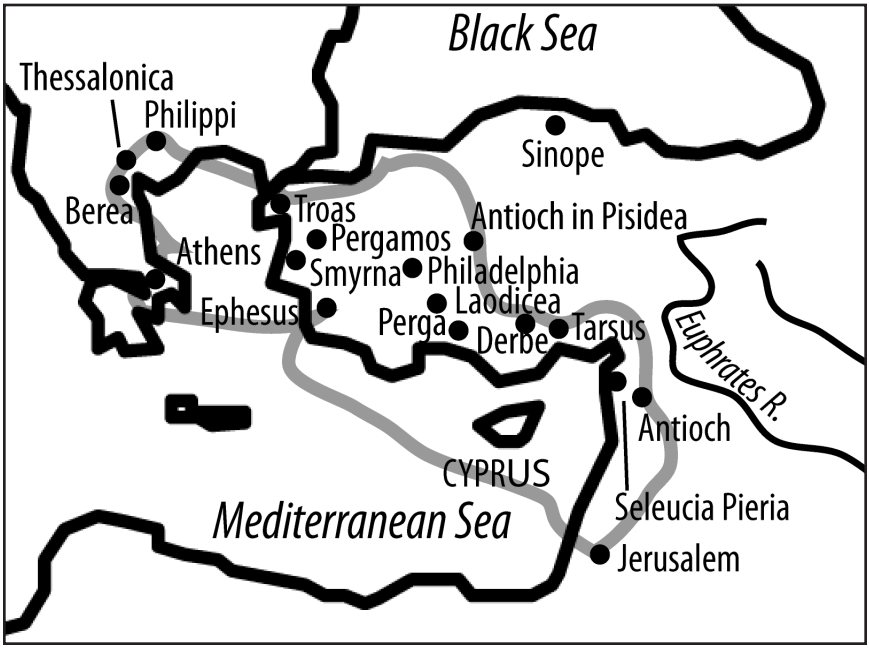
hibition against eating blood, too, might well have been an issue in particular with pagan sacrifices insofar as although "the Greco-Roman practice of slaughtering usually involved draining meat of its blood, Greek sacrificial technique did not prohibit cutting the trachea, and if it was cut the animal might suffocate on its own blood."[162]

The point that the council in Acts 15, thus, was attempting to make and that was reaffirmed by Paul was that even when Gentile Christians were not among Jewish believers, they were to maintain a lifestyle that was not affiliated with pagan practices; at the same time, they need not become full-on Jews in terms of cultural affiliation, completely disassociating from their cultural milieu. To be sure, such peoples in many significant ways "became Jews"—at least in terms of keeping the law read from the Torah each Sabbath—and that in itself would have disassociated many of them from their former neighbors. However, they did not need to take on many of the customs prescribed in the oral law that the Pharisees were attempting to enjoin on all believers, customs that Galatians 2:14 makes clear many of Christ's Jewish followers had not taken on either. The result was the creation of a class of "Jewish-Behaving Gentiles," as Karin Hedner Zetterholm describes them, leading to a blurring of the line between Jewish and non-Jewish people.[163] However, because the Jewish religion of the first century was a mélange of differing sects and opinions, the early Antiochene church, even if a majority Gentile entity, would have been seen as primarily Jewish in practice and custom.

Correspondence with the Emperor Trajan, by Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus, trans. William Melmoth and revised by F. C. T. Bosanquet, Project Gutenberg, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2811/2811-h/2811-h.htm#link2H_4_0096.

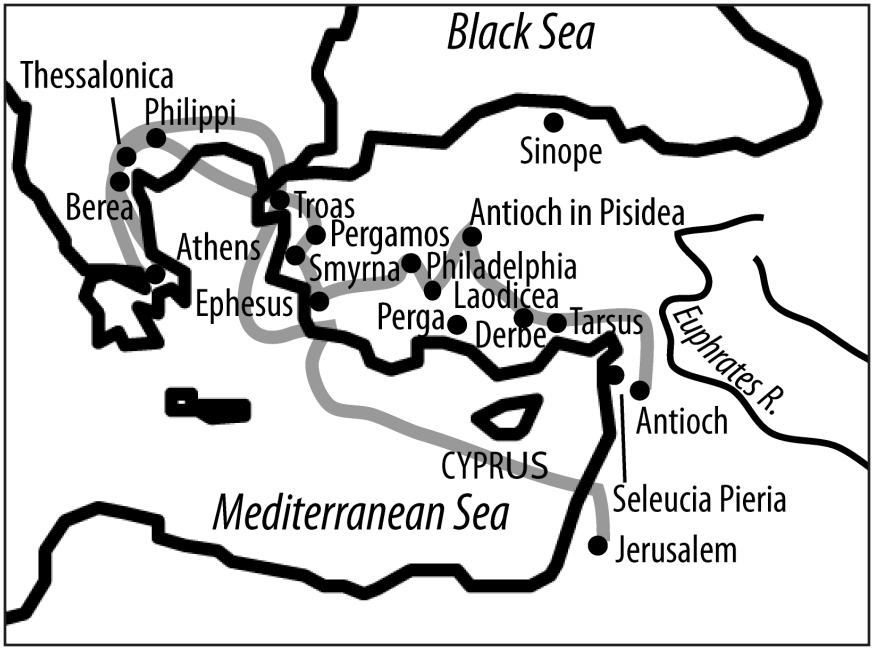
162. Karin Hedner Zetterholm, "Jewish-Behaving Gentiles," 328.

163. Zetterholm, 322–323.



Paul's second missionary journey

The Acts 15 letter not only confirmed the message that Barnabas and Paul had all along conveyed to the non-Jewish believers—that they were in every way equal to their Jewish counterparts; it also encouraged the Antioch church to continue the missionary work among non-Jewish people that it had earlier undertaken. The Jerusalem leadership sent the letter not only by the hands of Barnabas and Paul but also by those of Judas/Barsabas and Silas, who were prominent members in Jerusalem (Acts 15:22). The oral witness of the latter two was to establish firmly what the letter stated: that the work being done among non-Jewish people had the full endorsement of the Jerusalem church. As such, it would not take long before Barnabas and Paul would begin planning another trip to "visit [the] brethren in every city where [they had] preached the word of the Lord, *and see* how they [were] do[ing]"



Paul's third missionary journey

(Acts 15:36). Disagreement over companions, however, would lead Barnabas and Paul to part ways before the trip began (Acts 15:37–39). Barnabas opted to return to visit Cyprus, with Mark, who had accompanied Barnabas and Paul on the first portion of their first mission. Paul, by contrast, would choose a land route that would take him into Syria and Cilicia (Acts 15:41), which would include his hometown of Tarsus (Acts 21:39), to which he had returned after his conversion before his stay in Antioch (Acts 9:30, 11:25). As his companion he chose Silas (identified by the Roman name Silvanus in the biblical epistles), who, like Barnabas, had a good reputation with the Jerusalem church and was an acquaintance of Peter's (he would serve as the scribe of Peter's first letter), and, thus, who lent further legitimacy to the work Paul undertook. The journey, however, would take Paul far beyond the cities he

had already visited; three years or so would pass before he returned to Antioch (Acts 18:22–23). From here, sometime in the early 50s CE, unless one takes the account of Peter's visit in Galatians 2:11–14 as following Paul's second journey, Antioch falls from the biblical record.

Fragmentation, the Destruction of the Temple, and the Loss of History

Antioch's importance to the burgeoning church, however, was far from over, as later scattered records attest. Laying out that history in a coherent form, however, is another matter. Knowledge of the church in some other regions would continue to be spelled out for a few decades, with the whole of church history becoming murkier as the first century drew to a close. Likewise, although sufficient records regarding the city itself exist to provide a proper outline, how the histories of the two intersect is more obscure. It is probable that apostles, elders, and lay members from Jerusalem, as well as from other areas east, west, north, and south, visited the city and its attendant church, bringing with them news of the state of the Gospel in other regions, as well as encouragement, on their journeys to other locales and, if of the Jewish diaspora, on their pilgrimages to Jerusalem. Glanville Downey, in his history of Antioch, sees Peter as being active in the city from 47 to 54, running his missionary work from it and perhaps ordaining Evodius as its bishop.[164]

Also likely would have been the slow proliferation of alternate Christianities, inflected with various mixtures of Jewish and non-Jewish religious traditions, as substantiated in Paul's writing to the Galatians and in other biblical records. As such, no single synagogue, no single church gathering, can attest to—or speak for—the Antioch church's

164. Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 282, 284.

history during this time, since any particular gathering likely reflected the particularities of a given group's ideology once it split off from the Jerusalem-centered apostolic-approved faith, even if continuing to emphasize its ties to it;[165] in this sense, those who outline four basic clusters of believers, with varying adherence to Jewish traditions, may be correct, even if overemphasizing the break between Paul and the apostles Peter and James. "The subsequent history of the Christians at Antioch in fact suggests," Downey claims later in his work, ". . . that there were a number of . . . congregations, and that the various groups often followed quite different lines in their teaching and worship."[166] Michelle Slee concurs: "The Antioch church, rather than being a monolithic entity, contained several groups with different stances on the main issue of the day (Jewish-Gentile tablefellowship), stances that in turn ensured that each group developed along very different lines."[167] Conversely, other authors claim that "both Matthew and Ignatius depict one Christian community made up of Jews and Gentiles, defined over and against both the Jewish synagogue and various dissident Christians (for example, false prophets in Matthew, docetists and Judaizers in Ignatius). One does not get the impression from either Matthew or Ignatius that there are a number of different, organized churches existing side by side in the same place."[168] Such a claim, however, belies the very existence

165. Magnus Zetterholm, *Formation of Christianity in Antioch*, 92–93.

166. Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 278.

167. Slee, *Church in Antioch*, 162.

168. Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 40. This position is largely shared by Thomas A. Robinson, who asks cogently, "If early Christianity encompassed so many distinctive theological communities at the beginning of the second century, why did these distinctive communities so soon evaporate, leaving no trace of their existence?" However, Robinson in the end has to acknowledge that "a number of other groups also existed," even while they all "had links to" or "origins

of said other groups, while at the same time affirming that the authors of Matthew and of the Ignatian letters thought of themselves as part of the apostolically approved faith (the others simply weren't "true" Christians). The lack of a single voice with regard to Antiochene church events may be reflected in the contradicting accounts we have regarding the church's leadership. By some accounts Peter ordained Evodius bishop of Antioch; by others, there was no Evodius and Peter ordained Ignatius; yet another account claims that Peter ordained Evodius and Paul ordained Ignatius, so that there were two bishops in Antioch, with one outliving the other; still another claims that Peter ordained both Evodius *and* Ignatius, the latter after the former had died as Peter was traveling yet another time through town on his way to Rome; yet others claim there were no bishops in Antioch—just a council of elders—until sometime after Ignatius, or that Evodius was selected by such a council.[169] Such differences may reflect not just his-

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rooted in" the "Great Church." Robinson, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 77–78. The existence of multiple Christian gatherings with growing variation seems a near certainty, however, given the limited space houses would have afforded believers—likely no more than fifty people could fit in a given home—and the manner in which owners of the property would have maintained ultimate say over who could enter the building. On the size of house churches, see Vincent Branick, *The House Church in the Writings of Paul* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1989), 39–42; Hurtado, *At the Origins*, 41. If Christians amounted to as little as 0.1 percent of the population of Antioch by the end of the first century, that would have amounted to between forty-five and eight hundred people, which would have required perhaps as many as sixteen gatherings; only one host need splinter from the main body to forge a new version of Christianity.

169. Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 200, 284–285; Chapman "Evodius"; Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 2: *Ante-Nicene Christianity, A.D. 100–325*, "I. Life of Ignatius," Christian Classics Ethereal Library, https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/hcc2.v.xv.vi.html. Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.22, lists Evodius, then Ignatius. John Chrysostom ignores Evodius: "The Spirit introduced another teacher equivalent to Peter so that the building already completed

torical uncertainties amid a lack of recordkeeping but also varying governing structures and leaders emerging across multiple groups, each claiming a connection to apostolic authority. Indeed, as Allen Brent notes, early succession lists of bishops are largely questionable, based on parallel lists of kings and events in the kingdom at large; one such list even times bishoprics to the arrival and departure of Roman consuls.[170]

Even if we accept the idea that the various contradicting chronologies have a basis in reality and that the Antioch church was one entity with various groups fighting within it, the division into various versions of Christianity and, thus, separate churches would have been likely by the time the first century ended, as is made clear by 3 John 9–10 (likely written in the late first century), in which the rogue elder Diotrephes was casting people out of the church John wrote of; by Justin Martyr's words (in the early to mid-second century) in which he noted that he would associate with Jewish people as Christians only if they did not induce non-Jewish people "either to be cir-

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should not be made more unsound by the insignificance of the successor." John Chrysostom, *Homily on St. Ignatius*, chap. 4, trans. T. P. Brandram, from *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 1st Series, vol. 9, ed. Philip Schaff (Buffalo, N.Y.: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1889), revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1905.htm. *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, 7.4.46, proposes separate Petrine and Pauline ordinations, while John Malalas's *Chronography* notes that Peter ordained both. Malalas, 10.246, 10.252. The arguments for a council appear mostly among more contemporary scholars, including Downey, 285, and Allen Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Martyr Bishop and the Origin of Episcopacy* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), especially 30, 42, though such arguments are not without merit, given the Jewish usage of local councils. See Shira Schoenberg, "Ancient Jewish History: The Sanhedrin," Jewish Virtual Library, https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-sanhedrin; Yehuda Shurpin, "The Sanhedrin: The Jewish Court System," Chabad.org, https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4100306/jewish/The-Sanhedrin-The-Jewish-Court-System.htm.

170. Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 121–122.

Bishops of Antioch, to circa 212 CE

Peter*
Evodius†
Ignatius
Hero
Cornelius
Eros
Theophilus
Maximinus
Serapion

* Peter is noted as the first bishop in Origen's *Homilies on Luke* (6.4), Eusebius's *Church History* (3.36.2), Jerome's *On Illustrious Men* (chap. 1), and John Malalas's *Chronography* (10.242, 10.246). Jerome's *Chronicle* (2050–2060; https://www.tertullian.org/fathers/jerome_chronicle_03_part2.htm) lists Peter as the founder but Evodius as the first bishop. *The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* (7.4.46) lists both Peter and Paul as founders, the former ordaining Evodius, the latter Ignatius, so that the two were perhaps serving simultaneously for a time. John Malalas claims that Paul came first to Antioch; that Peter came afterward, was "enthroned there," and then rejected all non-Jewish converts, which required that Paul return to the city to reinstate them. However, Malalas (10.252) also claims Peter ordained Ignatius in Evodius's place after the latter's death.

† John Chrysostom skips Evodius in his account of Peter's appointment of Ignatius as bishop in his *Homily on St. Ignatius* (chap. 4).

cumcised like themselves, or to keep the Sabbath, or to observe any other such ceremonies"; and by the mythology surrounding Simon the Magician (from very early after the church's founding), who, Justin Martyr wrote, "almost all the Samaritans, and a few even of other nations, worship."[171] Simon's disciple Menander had his own following in Antioch, and he, in turn, taught the Gnostic Antiochene Saturninus, who proclaimed a Christ "sent to destroy the forces of evil . . . who was unborn and incorporeal and without figure."[172] That ideas and members crossed groups, infecting one another, is also apparent, since writers like Paul and Ignatius felt a need to warn against such people and teachings (see, for example, Gal. 1:6 and 2 Thess. 2:2), as did the later many heresiologists; the whole point of writing against heresy is, after all, to define what constitutes the orthodox teaching of a particular group.

A major contributor to the splintering of the church would have been an event that occurred during the time between the last mention of Antioch in scripture and its return to church writings with Ignatius's letters, an event that would greatly affect both Antioch and its Jerusalem mother congregation. The event was presaged around 62 CE by the martyrdom of James the brother of Jesus at the hands of the Jewish priestly aristocracy, a killing emblematic of the tension between Jewish elites and the growing Christian sect and that Eusebius later claimed was a reason for the events that were to occur in Jerusalem some four years afterward.[173] Indeed, as Josephus notes, James

171. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, chap. 47, Early Christian Writings, http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/justinmartyr-dialoguetrypho.html; Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, chap. 26

172. Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 290–291.

173. Eusebius, *Church History*, 2.23.19–20. Eusebius actually claims to quote Josephus on the matter, but the words do not appear in Josephus's surviving writings.

was stoned after being accused of being one of the "breakers of the law,"[174] paralleling the same kinds of issues that had gotten Paul in difficulties in Jerusalem a few years earlier (Acts 20:21, 28; 23:12, 20–21) and that seem to have been at the heart of the problem about which Paul had confronted Peter in Antioch. Eusebius, by contrast, relying on accounts by the second-century writers Clement of Alexandria and Hegesippus, makes James into an ascetic ("he drank no wine nor strong drink, nor did he eat flesh. No razor came upon his head; he did not anoint himself with oil, and he did not use the bath"), whose main sin was continuing to profess that Jesus was the Messiah.[175]

The opportunity to stone James had come during a transition between Roman procurators, Festus, the former having died, and Albinus, his successor, not yet having arrived, allowing the Jewish high priest, Ananus, to exercise his own judgment on such matters.[176] The unapproved Jewish action perhaps demonstrates the different forces that were at work in Jerusalem and Judea at the time and the difficulties that the Christian movement posed to other Jewish sects. Ananus was of the sect of the Sadducees, who, Josephus notes, generally rejected the oral law promoted by the Pharisees;[177] however, it seems likely to have been precisely by application of nonadherence to this law by which James's death sentence, handed down by the Sanhedrin council convoked by Ananus, was pronounced. Such lawbreaking would have been of importance chiefly to the Pharisees, and appeasing them would have theoretically

174. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 20.9.1, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2848/2848-h/2848-h.htm#link202HCH0009.

175. Eusebius, *Church History*, 2.23.3, 2.23.5, 2.23.10, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250102.htm. He acknowledges the issue of the law in 2.23.22.

176. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 20.9.1; Eusebius, *Church History*, 2.23.2.

177. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 13.10.6.

gone far in keeping peaceful relations with the sect; the Sadducees, by contrast, as a sect of the rich and ruling class,[178] were likely much more concerned with maintaining civil order so as to avoid troubles with Rome. A group claiming to be followers of a Messiah who was to set up a new kingdom—indeed, who was to "restore again the kingdom to Israel" (Acts 1:6)—was not conducive to such order, especially during a time in which civil disturbances were rife and other Messianic pretenders not uncommon. Back around 6 CE, a certain Judas of Galilee had led a revolt over the imposition of a Roman tax on Judea, reasoning that all true Jewish believers in God "were cowards if they would endure to pay a tax to the Romans and would after God submit to mortal men as their lords."[179] Another Jewish pretender, Theudas, raised four hundred men in his attempt to overthrow the Romans (Acts 5:36).[180] Sometime during the 50s CE, an Egyptian gathered several thousand men to march on the Mount of Olives and take Jerusalem back for the Jewish people (Acts 21:38).[181] Riots in Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch during the 30s and 40s, already alluded to, also contributed to the general feeling of unease among and about the Jewish people.

The killing of James the brother of Jesus, who had been known for his piety, apparently was not popular among much of the population, and although Ananus was deposed, Jewish high priests continued to use their positions

178. Josephus, 13.10.6.

179. Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, 2.8.1, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2850/2850-h/2850-h.htm#link22HCH0008.

180. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 20.5.1, writes of another Theudas who, around 45 CE, claimed to be a prophet who would divide the Jordan River and allow his people easy access to Jerusalem. Scholars debate whether this is the same Theudas, since the biblical account places Theudas before Judas the Galilean, while Josephus places him some forty years after. See commentaries on Acts 5:36 at Bible Hub, https://biblehub.com/commentaries/acts/5-36.htm.

181. Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, 2.13.5.

to curry favor with the Roman government and to amass wealth for themselves, such that some lower priests actually died for want of food and a band of Jewish rebels called the Sicarii began to kidnap priestly servants and hold them for ransom.[182] Meanwhile, the temple restoration undertaken by Herod the Great about eighty years earlier came to completion, and some eighteen thousand construction workers were left unemployed.[183] Jerusalem was a hotbed of distress. The heavy hand of Judea's Roman procurator Florus Gassius, who succeeded Albinus, did not help.

In the spring of 66 CE, Jerusalem—indeed, all of Judea—erupted. A disagreement between Jewish and non-Jewish people about the possession of a synagogue location in Caesarea led to fighting, which eventually, combined with Florus's seizure of seventeen talents of gold from the temple, led to protests in Jerusalem that Florus put down with imposing force, killing, Josephus claims, thirty-six hundred people.[184] The Jewish War of rebellion—or for freedom, depending on which side one took—was on. That fall, the governor of Syria, Cestius Gallus, marched from Antioch toward Jerusalem, demonstrating Roman power along the way—but also giving the Jewish rebels hope, given the heavy casualties they were able to inflict. Gallus's withdrawal from Jerusalem after a short siege allowed Christians residing there to flee, which they did, according to Eusebius, mostly settling at least for the near future in Pella, in the modern nation of Jordan; from there, with many not returning to Jerusalem after the conflict, they likely spread east to Mesopotamia or north and west to places like Antioch and Ephesus.[185] Indeed, one theory places the apostle

182. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 20.9.1–3; Eusebius, *Church History*, 2.23.19, 2.23.23.

183. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 20.9.7.

184. Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, 2.14.4–9.

185. Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.5.3; Epiphanius of Salamis, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis: A Treatise against Eight Sects in*

John in Antioch for a period, during which he wrote the first draft of the Gospel that bears his name, before his eventual move to Ephesus, where the Gospel would take final shape.[186] Not long after the Jerusalem church's flight, Rome sent its general Vespasian to clear the province of trouble, which he and his son Titus did over the next three years, culminating in the final besieging of Jerusalem and the destruction of its temple.[187]

Despite the fact that few diaspora Jewish people would join the Judean war,[188] the rebellion would still create trouble for the Jewish population in Antioch—and, perhaps, most especially for Christians. About the time that Vespasian handed the siege of Jerusalem over to his son, the son of a governor of the Jewish people in Antioch accused his father and other Jewish Antiochenes of plotting to burn the city, an accusation that led to attacks on the Jewish community and several deaths. Conspiring with the Roman commander and that commander's soldiers, Antiochus in turn compelled Jewish inhabitants to prove their allegiance to Rome by offering sacrifices "after the manner of the Greeks" and to give up the keeping of the Sab-

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Three Books, trans. Frank Williams (1987–2009), 1.29.7.7–8, 1.30.2.7, http://www.masseiana.org/panarion_bk1.htm; Moffett, *History of Christianity in Asia*, 51. Downey thinks it "unlikely that any considerable number of them [Jerusalem Jewish Christians] would have gone to Antioch," though he acknowledges that we have little information "concerning the history and the ultimate fate of the Jewish Christian community at Antioch." Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 287. The lingering influence of Jewish Christians in Asia Minor is attested to by the Quartodeciman controversy over the observance of Easter Sunday versus the Jewish Passover. See Eusebius, *Church History*, 5.23–25.

186. Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 297.

187. Some of the best concise but more detailed summaries of the conflict can be found in Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 7–22; and Moshe Aberbach and David Aberbach, *The Roman-Jewish Wars and Hebrew Cultural Nationalism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 29–32.

188. Rajak, "Mediterranean Jewish Diaspora," 45.

bath.[189] At least one historian has proposed the real objects of Antiochus's accusations were not Jewish people in general but Jewish Christians, although there is no explicit evidence of this in Josephus's account of the incident. The proposition is based on the following facts. First, Antiochus's accusation of his own father might more readily be explained as zealotry on the part of Antiochus if his father had recently converted to the new Christian sect. Second, Nero had, three years earlier, implicated Christians in the burning of Rome. And third, the sacrifice test used to identify participants in the plot would have served little purpose in identifying Jewish people, whose community was already readily known, but would have had the effect of identifying pious Christians, whether Jewish or not.[190] Indeed, as Thomas A. Robinson notes, "Jewish leadership may have had an interest in silencing any disputes in the Jewish community that could bring further unwanted attention on the community from already hostile inhabitants"; ridding themselves of the Christian "heresy" would have certainly enabled a more unified front.[191]

Regardless of the true aim of Antiochus's animosity, a short time after the Jewish War's conclusion, a marketplace, along with palaces and an archives building, actually did catch fire, and the same Antiochus again accused people of his nation of setting it. This, in turn, led a mob of Antiochene citizens to riot against the Jewish people in their midst. By this time, as Josephus notes, because of the earlier accusations and the recently concluded rebellion in Judea, the non-Jewish population was inclined to believe such rumors and to react accordingly, even though

189. Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, 7.3.3; Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 199–200; Rajak, "Mediterranean Jewish Diaspora," 44–45.

190. E. Mary Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule: From Pompey to Diocletian* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 362. Smallwood's theory is summarized in Thomas A. Robinson, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 135–136.

191. Thomas A. Robinson, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 38.

the perpetrators proved to be simply a group of debt holders looking destroy the records of said debt (a strategy certain Jewish Zealots had themselves used in Jerusalem in attempting to rouse the populace in anticipation of the Jewish War).[192]

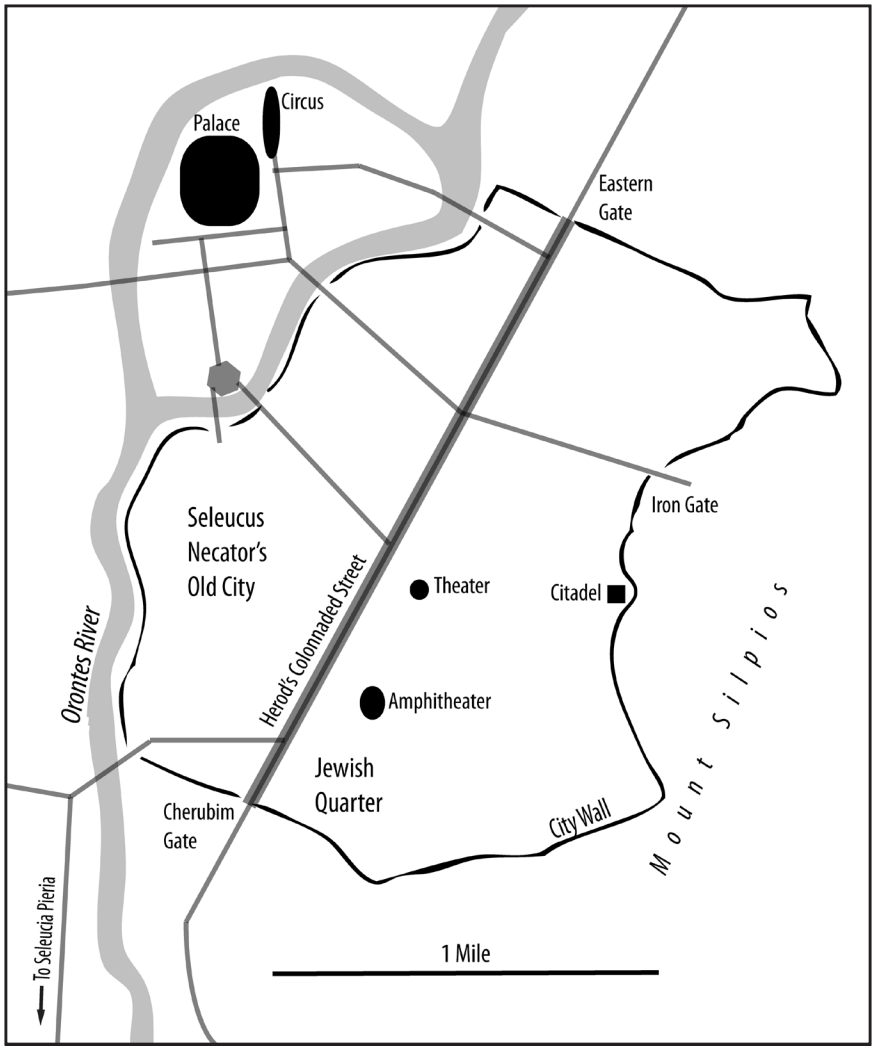
In other words, the Jewish War and the temple's destruction led to a wave of anti-Jewish unrest elsewhere and to a concomitant antisemitism that would remain in place throughout the empire for years to come, one that was likely exacerbated in the near term by Jewish refugees from the crisis taking up residence elsewhere.[193] Indeed, the Roman general Titus, on a triumphant march through Antioch after the war, twice had to reject petitions from the people of Antioch to "eject the Jews out of their city." "How can this be done," Titus apparently answered, "since that country of theirs, whither the Jews must be obliged then to retire, is destroyed, and no place will receive them besides?"[194] Although Titus ultimately upheld the rights that the Jewish sector had long enjoyed in the city, he did not spare it ample display of its nation's defeat at war. Spoils from the war, including the cherubim from the temple's Holy of Holies, were placed at Antioch's southern gate, through which Jewish refugees would have entered the city; near the Jewish quarter a pagan sculpture of a moon and four bulls was erected; sporting events throughout Syria featured (the slaughter of) Jewish war captives. In numerous ways, then, the humiliation of the Jewish population was flaunted.[195] A faith and culture

192. Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, 7.3.4, 2.17.6; Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 204–205; Rajak, "Mediterranean Jewish Diaspora," 46.

193. On enmity in Syria, see Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 199; Magnus Zetterholm, *Formation of Christianity in Antioch*, 117.

194. Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, 7.5.2, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2850/2850-h/2850-h.htm#link72HCH0005.

195. Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter in Scripture*, 69–70; Slee, *Church in Antioch*, 132; Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 204–206; Rajak,



Layout of the city of Antioch of Syria

Note the Jewish sector's location near the Cherubim Gate. The location of the Pantheon, near which Barnabas and Paul are said to have preached, is unfortunately unknown.

Map based on those appearing in Glanville Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria from Seleucus to the Arab Conquest* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961); Virginia Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), http://persweb.wabash.edu/facstaff/royaltyr/AncientCities/web/bradleyj/Project%201/antiochmap.html; Antiochian, "The Street Layout," The Antiochopedia = Musings upon Ancient Antioch, March 31, 2008, http://libaniusredux.blogspot.com/2008/03/street-layout.html; Antiochia su Oronte, Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Antiochia_su_Oronte.PNG.

that might have had at one time a certain appeal to non-Jewish residents now was held in derision; Christian culture would adjust accordingly.[196]

The destruction of the temple would lead to changes in the diaspora Jewish community as well. As the temple had been the focus of the faith, its destruction meant that the religion had to be reoriented. The teachings of the Pharisaical sect, which in many ways focused on the priesthood of believers rather than that of the temple itself, often by applying the Levitical purity laws to individual adherents of the faith rather than to hereditary Jewish officeholders, were more suitable for such a transition than those of many other sects.[197] Further, the scattering of Jewish people from Judea, where the Pharisees had been dominant, meant that the diaspora itself took on a more Pharisaical cast, from which rabbinic Judaism would emerge.[198] No longer did "certain come from James" (Gal. 2:11) in Jerusalem to pester the believers in Jesus; rather, they now took up residence among the Jewish diaspora inhabitants of Antioch and elsewhere, transforming the very cultural makeup of those Jewish communities.[199] Beyond that, the impulse among the Pharisees to separate themselves from the general populace and most especially from non-Jewish people now took on even greater importance in preserving

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"Mediterranean Jewish Diaspora," 45; Thomas A. Robinson, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 138.

196. Slee, *Church in Antioch*, 132; Meeks and Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch*, 18.

197. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time*, 265–266; Jacob Neusner, *Invitation to the Talmud: A Teaching Book* (Eugene, Oreg.: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1998), 40.

198. On Pharisaical dominance in Jerusalem and Jewish Antiochene diversity before the temple's destruction, see Magnus Zetterholm, *Formation of Christianity in Antioch*, 65. On the scattering, see Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 48–49; on the emergence of rabbinical Judaism from the Pharisaic sect, Cohen, *From the Maccabees*, 226–227.

199. Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 48–49.

the uniqueness of a Jewish community that no longer had a homeland to which to gaze.[200] Concerns for Jewish laws and customs now literally replaced the temple as the focus of the Jewish people.[201] The Christian sect, which allowed easy integration of non-Jewish people into the Jewish community, was a danger to the preservation of that community as a unique cultural entity, and Jewish refugees wishing to protect their heritage took action accordingly.[202]

In the decades following, for example, rabbinic regulations regarding food began to take on not just concerns with how it was prepared but also with who prepared it in an attempt "to exclude certain people from commensality even if there was nothing objectionable about their food."[203] "All [Israelites] may slaughter [an animal], even a Samaritan, even an uncircumcised [one], and even an apostate (yisrael meshumad)," one new regulation noted, but "slaughter by a heretic (min) is [an act of] idolatry. Slaughter by a Gentile—behold, this is invalid."[204] While some have speculated that the so-called Noachide laws, traditionally ascribed to God's covenant with mankind after the Noahic flood, were the basis for the Apostolic Decree in Acts 15:29 regarding the integration of Jewish and non-Jewish believers, a later creation of the laws by rabbinical authorities in response to the Christian integration of non-Jewish people, Karin Hedner Zetterholm spec-

200. Karin Hedner Zetterholm, "Jewish-Behaving Gentiles," 334.

201. Alieza Salzberg, "Judaism after the Temple: Coping with Destruction and Building for the Future," My Jewish Learning, https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/judaism-after-the-temple/; Cohen, *From the Maccabees*, 226.

202. Karin Hedner Zetterholm, "Jewish-Behaving Gentiles," 322–323; Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 48.

203. Karin Hedner Zetterholm, "Jewish-Behaving Gentiles," 337.

204. *T. Hul.* 1:1, quoted in Karin Hedner Zetterholm, "Jewish-Behaving Gentiles," 337.

ulates, is a more likely scenario.[205] These laws, unlike the Old Testament regulations reiterated in the Acts 15 letter in an effort to integrate non-Jewish believers, had the exact opposite effect—that is, they were created to separate ethnically inclined God-fearing non-Jewish people from actual Jewish people.[206] No longer were non-Jewish God-fearers expected to take on many Jewish practices, such as the sabbath—in fact, they had no right to do so, since such things were reserved only for those fully committed to the oral Torah regulations.[207] No longer, in other words, could non-Jewish people be folded into the special covenant between God and Israel without full conversion to what became rabbinical Judaism.[208]

Unfortunately, much of this transition in Antioch goes unrecorded in Christian writings of the late first century. When we next come across the Antioch church in early literature, this time, in the early second century, with the let-

205. Karin Hedner Zetterholm, "Jewish-Behaving Gentiles," 339–343. The Noachide laws stipulated that non-Jewish associates abstain from "blasphemy, idolatry, adultery, bloodshed, robbery, and eating of flesh torn from a live animal," or drinking blood from a live animal. Sanhedrin 56a, cited in Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 278. Although the first written form of the Noachide laws appears in the Jewish book *Jubilees*, 7.20, 28, around the second century BCE, they differ a bit from later rabbinic tradition. The Noachide laws, as something distinguishable from the Sinaitic law, first explicitly appear in rabbinic tradition, suggesting that they were part of an oral tradition that likely developed later, rather than at the time of Noah. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 170–171. For more on the Noachide laws, see also Jeffrey Spitzer, "The Noahide Laws," My Jewish Learning, https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-noahide-laws/; Cohen, *From the Maccabees*, 217.

206. Karin Hedner Zetterholm, "Jewish-Behaving Gentiles," 341.

207. Zetterholm, 341.

208. Zetterholm, 341. For more on the rabbinical redefining of what constituted the Jewish faith, see also Philip S. Alexander, "Jewish Believers in Early Rabbinic Literature (2d to 5th Centuries)," chap. 21 in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, ed. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 659–709; and Cohen, *From the Maccabees*, 226–228.

ters of the Antiochene bishop Ignatius, we get only opaque glimpses into what has happened in the intervening time; Ignatius, alas, chooses to write mostly about doctrine, and when he does choose to write about the actual physical church, it is often more about the churches of Asia Minor he is visiting on his way to martyrdom in Rome than that of his home. After that, we have in the late second century the Antiochene bishop Theophilus's *To Autolycus*, which again focuses mostly on teaching. To read the late first century, historians are reduced to relying on later records that provide little in the way of detail and that are, in some ways, suspect. Many resort to looking at works they hypothesize *may* have been written in Antioch during the intervening time.

The Gospel of Matthew

One popular theory is that the Gospel of Matthew was composed in Antioch between 70 and 100 CE, most likely between 80 and 90 CE.[209] Reasons for the theory include the following: its seeming dependence on the book of Mark; the book's polished use of Greek; Ignatius's seeming familiarity with the work; its inclusion of material regarding the destruction of the temple, without heavy emphasis on its accompanying Jewish War; and a mix of concerns that would have applied uniquely to both Jewish and non-Jewish converts, including the manner in which worldwide

209. Introduction to the "Gospel of Matthew," Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/matthew.html; Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 19; Slee, *Church in Antioch*, 119–122; Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, ix, 15–18, 22–27; Marilyn Mellowes, "An Introduction to the Gospels," *Frontline*, April 1998, https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/story/mmfour.html; Benjamin W. Bacon, "Peter's Triumph at Antioch," *Journal of Religion* 9, no. 2 (April 1929): 210–211, Jstor, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1196729.

mission work serves as a central theme of the book and the book's focus particularly on matters revolving around the emerging rabbinical Judaism.[210] Yet, this proposed time and place of composition are not without their detractors, and each of these arguments has countervailing explanations, such that the writing of Matthew has been placed as early as about ten years after the death of Jesus and within Judea itself.[211] As such, depending significantly on Matthew as a major source for the events happening in Antioch during the late first century is dubious.

Matthew's supposed dependence on Mark requires the latter to have been written first. Scholars who believe in Mark's primacy as a Gospel do so most especially based on its being the shortest and sketchiest of the four Gospels. While Mark includes approximately 3 percent of material unique to itself, Matthew and Luke include 20 and 35 percent respectively.[212] Why, the thinking goes, bother creating, no less preserving, a work such as Mark that essentially repeats information already presented elsewhere? Several early historical accounts of the writing of the Gospels, however, argue for Matthew's primacy.[213] Eusebius,

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210. Slee, *Church in Antioch*, 119–122; Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 15–18, 22–27.

211. Detractors include Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter in Scripture*, 68–70; John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Eugene, Oreg.: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1976), 96, available online at https://richardwaynegarganta.com/redating-testament.pdf; Finch, *Beyond Acts*, 178, 241n30, 311; Wenham, *Redating Matthew, Mark, and Luke*.

212. A. M. Honoré, "A Statistical Study of the Synoptic Problem," *Novum Testamentum* 10, nos. 2–3 (April–July 1968): 96, table 1, Jstor, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1560364.

213. A full listing of the various ancient testimonies to this assertion can be found here: Mathew Ervin, "The Gospel of Matthew Was First Written in Hebrew," Apply Eye Ministries, January 4, 2014, https://appleeye.org/2014/01/04/the-gospel-of-matthew-was-first-written-in-hebrew/. The order of composition (Matthew, then Mark, Luke, and John) is denoted in Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 3.1.1, Early Christian

in his *Church History*, who was himself drawing on traditions recorded by the second-century writers Clement of Alexandria and Papias, denotes that "Matthew, who had at first preached to the Hebrews, when he was about to go to other peoples, committed his Gospel to writing in his native tongue, and thus compensated those whom he was obliged to leave for the loss of his presence."[214] As such, the writing of Matthew may have coincided with the departure of the apostles from Jerusalem shortly after James the brother of John's death around 41–44 CE or, if taking a later date for that departure, with James the brother of Jesus's death in the early 60s CE.[215] Such thinking also would lead one to believe that the Gospel was written in Judea.[216] As such, it is possible that Matthew's Gospel was the primary one used in early missionary efforts, which would thus account for Ignatius of Antioch's quotations of it and for its appearance (along with Mark) in places as far away as India before the year 200 CE.[217] If, as Eusebius notes, Matthew was written in Hebrew, it would hardly have been of value outside the Jewish community—and particularly the community in Judea, since diaspora Jews were less likely to know their native tongue; as such, a translation or translations of the book would have been necessary for any other apostles using it as they scattered to other locations. Eusebius says as much, quoting Papius, "Matthew wrote the oracles in the Hebrew language, and

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Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/irenaeus-book3.html.

214. Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.24.6.

215. Finch, *Beyond Acts*, 241n304, 311; John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, 91, 96; McBirnie, *Search for the Twelve Apostles*, 40–44, 181.

216. Finch, *Beyond Acts*, 178; McBirnie, *Search for the Twelve Apostles*, 181.

217. Finch, *Beyond Acts*, 312; McBirnie, *Search for the Twelve Apostles*, 177; Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 24.

every one interpreted them as he was able."[218] This may account for Mark's gospel, which Eusebius recounts as having been created at the request of believers in Rome after Peter visited.[219] Perhaps, if Peter did travel to Rome sometime during the reign of Claudius in the 40s CE, he cribbed oral presentations from the written Matthew, which Mark then transferred into written Greek at the request of Peter's listeners, who would hardly have had the same concerns about the temple or Jewish legal customs and sects that Jerusalem readers would have had, thus accounting for Mark's greater brevity.[220] Indeed, the difference in focus can be seen, for example, in Mark's dropping out the kingly lineage of Jesus recounted in Matthew 1 and in the fact that he mentions the temple-centered sect of the Sadducees just one time in one passage, while Matthew mentions the same sect seven times in three passages.[221]

Matthew's polished use of Greek, however, would seem to argue for a different origin. If Mark is a Greek crib from a Hebrew Matthew, surprisingly, the Matthean manuscripts, as they have come down to us, reflect much better use of the Greek language, as evidenced, for example, in plays on

218. Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.39.16. McBirnie posits that Matthew actually wrote in Aramaic, then translated it into Hebrew. McBirnie, *Search for the Twelve Apostles*, 181. Such would have still required translation into Greek for apostles visiting areas to the west—or possibly to other languages in areas farther afield.

219. Eusebius, *Church History*, 2.15.1, 3.39.15.

220. John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, 97. Irenaeus's account of the writing of the four Gospels, however, would discount this possibility, as he claims "Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome." Mark still comes after, in his rendering, but seems not to be dependent on Matthew. Such an assertion tries credulity, however, given the heavy similarities between the two works (indeed, they share 56 percent of the same material). Honoré, "Statistical Study," 96, table 1.

221. John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, 97.

words one would not expect of a translation.[222] Complicating the assertion that Matthew was written in Hebrew is also the fact that we have no such Hebrew manuscripts and early quotations of the Gospel clearly reflect the Greek version.[223] Indeed, the idea that Matthew would have had to write a Hebrew version seems rather dubious, given the fact that Greek was the primary literary language even of Judea in the first century.[224] That said, it is possible that Matthew, or some other early Gospel that became associated with Matthew, went through multiple editions, some of which may have contained Hebrew or Aramaic, before the rendering of the final version that was widely distributed and preserved for posterity.

Multiple scholars posit the idea that Matthew's Gospel retains various layers of rendition.[225] In writing about a Hebrew version of Matthew contained in a work from 1380 by Shem-Tob called *Even Bohan*, George Howard claims, for example, that "in spite of numerous revisions and some possible Grecisms in the Hebrew text, there is evidence that points to the antiquity of the stratum of Shem-Tob's Matthew and that suggests that the old substratum is an original Hebrew composition."[226] Indeed, Jerome claims that a gospel in Hebrew existed in the "library at Caesarea" at the time he was writing in the late fourth century and

222. Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 23.

223. John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, 91; "Appendix D: The New Testament."

224. Hengel, *"Hellenization" of Judaea*, 8, 14; "Appendix D: The New Testament."

225. See, for example, Honoré, "Statistical Study," 135; Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, ix; John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, 91–92, 95.

226. George Howard, "The Textual Nature of Shem-Tob's Hebrew Matthew," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108, no. 2 (Summer 1989): 244, Jstor, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3267296. For a contrasting view on the *Even Bohan*, see David Bivin, "Has a Hebrew Gospel Been Found?," *Jerusalem Perspective*, October 9, 2006, https://www.jerusalemperspective.com/4067/.

that Nazarenes in Berea, in Syria, used the volume, though many scholars find it doubtful that this work, sometimes identified with *The Gospel to the Hebrews*, was in fact Matthew.[227] Indeed, it may be that Papias's and many other early writers' references to the Hebrew composition of Matthew may in fact be to this other Gospel, or it may be that the *Gospel to the Hebrews* reflects a yet later rendering by a nonorthodox Jewish Christian sect.[228] Still, other scholars note the way in which Matthew appears to contain varying layers of concern, such that, as John A. T. Robinson claims in his book on dating the New Testament, "Matthew . . . gives evidence of the longest formation history. It has often been observed that Matthew is a 'collector,' accumulating diverse layers of tradition . . . , which may reflect different states or stages of composition."[229] For Robinson, then, as a place of writing, "Antioch . . . seems a likely locale . . .though the tradition behind it is surely Palestinian."[230] Michelle Slee sees Matthew as recording a specific Antiochene community in transition, as opposed

227. Jerome, *On Illustrious Men*, chap. 3, trans. Ernest Cushing Richardson, from *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd series, vol. 3, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Buffalo, N.Y.: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1892), revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight, New Advent, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2708.htm; Ray Pritz, "Did Jerome See the Hebrew Gospel of Matthew?," *Jerusalem Perspective*, July 1, 1990, https://www.jerusalemperspective.com/4147/; introduction to the *Gospel of the Hebrews*, Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/gospelhebrews.html.

228. Pritz, "Did Jerome See?"; introduction to the *Gospel of the Hebrews*. Irenaeus denotes that the Jewish sect of the Ebionites, who according to him rejected the virgin birth of Jesus and thus his divine origin, used Matthew only. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.11.7. Eusebius using similar language, however, claims that Ebionites "used only the so-called Gospel according to the Hebrews," rejecting Paul's epistles and making "small account of the rest" of the Gospels. Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.27.4.

229. John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, 95.

230. Robinson, 94.

to other Christian communities, one that was originally against the Gentile mission but that had recently changed positions because of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, such that we find two strands of writing within it, one seemingly concerned chiefly with Jewish culture and one seemingly open to all people.[231] Likewise, Meier notes that Matthew "does not throw away the various strands of the old Jewish-Christian tradition. Rather, he absorbs them into a higher theological viewpoint."[232] Thus, even if one takes the view that Matthew was written later rather than earlier, earlier drafts of the Gospel seem possible if not probable. Such a possibility, however, remains merely theoretical, because, of course, once again, no such early manuscript versions exist.

A particularly intriguing theory, proposed by Andre Tuilier in his writing on the early Christian work the *Didache* (one that falls in line with John A. T. Robinson's own ideas about Matthew and the *Didache*), is that Matthew's original Gospel—that written in his native tongue according to Papias's account—consisted only of popular sayings and was created around 45 CE; this Gospel was subsequently translated into Greek around 55–60, circulated more widely, and took on the name *The Gospel of the Lord* (as referenced in the likely first-century *Didache*); and then was later supplemented with biographical details from various traditions around 65–70 CE in what would be its final rendition.[233] What's intriguing about the theory is that this proto-Matthew provides us with a possible source for

231. Slee, *Church in Antioch*, 131–134.

232. Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 59.

233. Tuilier's work appears only in French. I rely here on William Varner's summary of it in *The Way of the Didache: The First Christian Handbook* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2007), 51–52. John A. T. Robinson notes that the quotes in the *Didache* that resemble Matthew likely come from an earlier rendition of Matthew. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, 89–91.

much of the repetition of material in the synoptic Gospels and also perhaps the identity of the theoretical Q document many scholars believe lies behind the synoptics, as well as a reason for the writing of the much shorter Mark, which would have antedated the full version of Matthew.[234]

That the writing of Matthew had to have occurred in Antioch because it had to have happened after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE is another dubious claim, especially if Matthew is not dependent on Mark. For some, prophetic references to Jerusalem's and the temple's destruction (Matthew 23:37, 24:2, 27:51) denote that the author was attempting to establish the veracity of Jesus's message by making a historical incident into a prophetic one; further, such thinkers claim to find oblique historical references to Jerusalem's destruction in passages like Matthew 22:7 ("the king . . . sent forth his armies . . . and burned up their city").[235] At the same time, the reasoning goes, the lack of an overweening concern for the events of the Jewish War shows that the work could not have been written within the first few years after that war, when such events would have been foremost on the author's mind.[236] Thus, such thinkers come to the logical conclusion that Matthew must have been written at least a decade after the events.[237] That said, although the destruction of a building as imposing as the temple would have seemed beyond belief to many who heard such a prediction and would have thus been a stupid prediction to make if one wanted to ensure that one's teachings were to be accepted a few years hence, other prophecies that fall alongside the temple's destruction (that is, the end of the world and the return of Jesus) in Matthew 24 did not come to pass.

234. Varner, *Way of the Didache*, 52.

235. Slee, *Church in Antioch*, 123; Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 15–18.

236. Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 16.

237. Brown and Meier, 16.

One wonders why an author looking to include history as prophecy would have bothered to record events that clearly seemed to contradict the supposed accuracy of the prophecy. Indeed, the failure of Jesus to return at the time of the temple's destruction could arguably have been cause for much of the falling away among Jewish Christians and the reframing of many Christian doctrines in the decades following.[238] If, then, the Matthew 24 prophecy does not mandate a post-70 writing date, there is little reason that an earlier writing date cannot be acceptable, and if that is the case, there is also little reason that other places such as Jerusalem itself could not have served as the location of writing.

One other argument with regard to the Antiochene origin of Matthew revolves around its presentation of Jewish leaders, alongside its seeming approval of the non-Jewish mission.[239] In such thinking, such a mixed presentation could only have occurred after rabbinical Judaism began its ascent in the wake of Jerusalem's fall and after the Christian church began accepting non-Jewish people among its adherents, suggesting a locale close to Judea such as Antioch, where the two groups would have collided.[240] Such an argument, however, can also be used to profess an early time of writing and a Judean locale. "Matthew, although he embraces the gentile mission," historian Markus Bockmuehl notes, "neither envisages a mixed Christian polity nor sees as yet any need to address any of the major practical issues such a polity would entail."[241] In other words, issues with regard to the integration of the two communities had not yet come to the fore, suggesting

238. Shirley Jackson Case, *The Millennial Hope: A Phase of War-Time Thinking* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1918), 155. See also 2 Peter 3:3–4.

239. Slee, *Church in Antioch*, 119–122.

240. Slee, 123.

241. Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter in Scripture*, 69.

that the text was written very early on, perhaps by the early 40s. Furthermore, Matthew's critique of the Jewish oral law and those who promoted it does not necessitate rabbinic Judaism already having decisively won the battle for the Jewish mind among the nation's various sects. Josephus, although writing after the temple's destruction, denotes that the Pharisees were the most popular among the various Jewish sects, even before Jerusalem's fall.[242] Indeed, Matthew's inclusion of discussions about the Sadducees would seem to indicate a time of writing before that sect had largely disappeared.[243]

What the use of Matthew by Ignatius does show, however, is that, in the decades following the temple's destruction, the issues that the church in Antioch faced with regard to Jewish and non-Jewish integration certainly continued. The book of Matthew need not have been written in Antioch to make such a claim. With its heavy focus on Jewish practices, and its original prime audience likely other Jewish people, Matthew was a perfect tool to critique those practices and for non-Jewish and Jewish believers to use to denigrate one another and, thus, to split the Antioch church community along such ideological lines.[244] Thus, Jesus could on one hand declare:

> Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in

242. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 13.10.5–6, 18.1.3.
243. John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, 97.
244. Magnus Zetterholm, *Formation of Christianity in Antioch*, 224.

> the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 5:17–20)

And on the other hand, he could state, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in" (Matt. 23:13), as he does in his long diatribe against them in Matthew 23, while at the same time encouraging his disciples to "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations" (Matt. 28:19). In other words, there is enough exposition on Jewish law to suggest a faith that remains and should remain close to its Jewish origins and people; at the same time, there is enough critique of the power wielded by the Pharisaical sect, whose influence only grew in the wake of the temple's destruction, and enough encouragement for believers beyond the Jewish people to suggest that the faith needs to depart from its Jewish origins. Matthew fits both schools of thought quite well and, thus, would have proved politically useful to believers in Antioch fighting over the direction the church should take. Such would account for why Ignatius chose to quote it more often than the Gospel of Luke, which, being written by a Antiochene Syrian, according to tradition, and aimed at non-Jewish believers, would otherwise logically make more sense as the more popular Gospel in Antioch.[245]

Matthew also points to a concern with false teachers, which would have served well the purposes of late first-century and early second-century Christian believers looking to distinguish themselves from one another. The aforementioned prophecy in Matthew 24, particularly, points to

245. Bacon, "Peter's Triumph at Antioch," 210.

such issues. Not just one time but three times in the passage, Jesus warns of many who would come in his name, false Christs and false prophets, who would "deceive many" (Matt. 24:5, 11), even, "if it were possible . . . the very elect" (Matt. 24:24). Indeed, by the time that Ignatius apparently wrote his letters in the early second century, combating the spread of the teaching of "some [who] are wont of malicious guile to hawk about the Name [of Jesus Christ], while they do certain other things unworthy of God," is arguably the main purpose of most of his communication: his desire to be martyred, his call for unity, his arguments against docetism and Judaizing, and his commands to retain loyalty to the bishop.[246]

The Didache

Another work some scholars see as being written in Antioch in the post-temple years before Ignatius's letters is the *Didache*, or *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*. The work consists of fifteen short chapters of instruction and a final chapter about Christ's second coming and the end of the age, with the first six chapters focusing on personal moral standards, and the next nine on church rites and order (baptism, fasting, shared meals, itinerant preachers, and ecclesiastical government). Reasons some scholars believe the *Didache* to have been written in or near Antioch between 70 and 100 CE include the following: the Jewish flavor and simplicity of the teachings; various geographical references within the document; the references to hypocrites and itinerant teachers; and the form of church

246. Quote from Ignatius, *Ignatius to the Ephesians*, trans. J. B. Lightfoot, 7.1, *Apostolic Fathers* (1891), Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/ignatius-ephesians-lightfoot.html. All quotes from the seven Ignatian letters are from Lightfoot's middle-length version unless otherwise noted.

leadership denoted in the document.[247] Dogmatically applying the period and region to the *Didache*'s origin as a means of elucidating Antioch's history is problematic here too, however, for like the Gospel of Matthew, plenty of debate remains regarding that origin. Some critics, especially early after its discovery in the late 1800s, have dated the *Didache* to as late as the fourth century (a date that at this point most scholars would see as clearly dubious), while others have dated it to as early as 50 CE.[248] Similarly, some critics place the document's origins in Egypt or Asia Minor rather than Syria.[249]

A major reason some propose its creation in Egypt is that what appear to be the earliest references to the work, as well as various early manuscript fragments of it, come from that region.[250] Clement of Alexandria was apparently the first to quote from it, when he noted in his *Stromata*, "Son, be not a liar; for falsehood leads to theft," a statement that mirrors *Didache*, 3.5: "My child, be not a liar, for lying leadeth unto theft."[251]

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247. Slee, *Church in Antioch*, 57, 61; Varner, *Way of the Didache*, 4.

248. Surveys of various proposed dates can be found in Thomas O'Loughlin, *The Didache: A Window on the Earliest Christians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2010), 10; Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 81n180; Daniel Nessim, *Torah for Gentiles? What the Jewish Authors of the Didache Had to Say* (Eugene, Oreg.: Pickwick Publications, 2021), chap. 2, EBSCO-host; introduction to *Didache*, Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/didache.html; Chris Thomas, "The Didache: Its Origin and Significance," EarlyChurch.org.uk, https://earlychurch.org.uk/article_didache.html. Both Justin Taylor, "Why Were the Disciples," 77, and Aaron Milavec, *The Didache: Faith, Hope, and Life of the Earliest Christian Communities, 50–70 CE* (Red Bank, N.J.: Newman Press, 2003), favor the early date.

249. Surveys of various proposed places can be found in O'Loughlin, *Didache*, 8–9; Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 81n180; introduction to *Didache*; Slee, *Church in Antioch*, 57; Nessim, *Torah for Gentiles?*, chap. 1.

250. Slee, *Church in Antioch*, 57; Varner, *Way of the Didache*, 11.

251. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 1.20, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/clement-stromata-book1.html; *The*

Some scholars also see in Clement's *Paedagogue, or The Instructor*, similarities in his emphasis and organization, particularly in chapter 12 of book 3, with that of the *Didache*.[252] Origen, too, is said to have quoted *Didache*, 3.10 ("accept the things that happen to thee as good, knowing that without God nothing happens"), when he noted in *De Principiis*, "receive all that happens as sent by God, knowing that without Him no event occurs."[253] Our two earliest extant fragments of the *Didache* were also found in Egypt, one from the fourth century quoting parts of chapters 1–3, and one from the fifth century that preserves parts of chapters 10–12.[254] In addition, chapters 18–20 of the *Epistle of Barnabas*, whose origin most scholars place in Alexandria sometime after 70 CE, bears great similarity to chapters 1–6 of the *Didache* in that both provide a set of commands that focus on the so-called "two ways," though the *Didache*'s ways lead to life or death, while *Barnabas*'s lead to light or darkness.[255] Early after the *Didache*'s dis-

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Didache, or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, trans. Charles H. Hoole, Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/didache-hoole.html.

252. See, in particular, F. R. Montgomery Hitchcock, "Did Clement of Alexandria Know the 'Didache'?," *Journal of Theological Studies* 24, no. 96 (July 1923): 397–401, Jstor, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23950530.

253. Origen, *De Principiis*, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 3.2.7, Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/origen124.html; Nessim, *Torah for Gentiles?*, chap. 2; Varner, *Way of the Didache*, 11.

254. Shawn J. Wilhite, "Manuscript Tradition for the Didache," December 29, Shawn J. Wilhite's blog, https://www.shawnjwilhite.com/blog/2017/12/29/manuscript-tradition-for-the-didache.

255. Varner, *Way of the Didache*, 11; Chris Thomas, "Didache." *Barnabas*'s origins are discussed in the introduction to the *Epistle of Barnabas* at Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/barnabas.html; and at Paulin Ladeuze, "Epistle of Barnabas," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 2 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907), New Advent, http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02299a.htm.

covery, common thinking was to attribute the inspiration of the passages to Barnabas and thus date the *Didache* to after the epistle, in the mid- to late second century; the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947, however, and specifically the *Qumran Manual of Discipline* (*Serek Hayaad*), which uses similar "two ways" language, showed that both works likely had a common earlier Jewish source for the motif.[256] Indeed, the Jewish tradition itself probably rests within the choice laid out at the end of Deuteronomy 30, which is repeated as a motif elsewhere in the Old Testament ("I have set before you thee this day life and good, and death and evil," reads Deuteronomy 30:15, after which follows a call to keep God's commands if one wants to receive the former rather than the latter). Like that passage in Deuteronomy 30, though in much greater detail, the *Didache* then proceeds, in its first five chapters, to lay out a set of commands that echo the last five of the ten commandments in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5, as well as Christ's Sermon on the Mount, before setting out the works that will lead to death in chapter 6.

With Barnabas no longer seen as an essential prequel to the work, other clues within the *Didache* have led most recent scholars to suggest a Syrian origin. Among these are references to potential drought and to mountains—both of which fit northern Palestine or Syria much better than Egypt would. The implication that drought was an issue comes in a passage about baptism, wherein the author provides various options for completing the rite when running water is not available.[257] The reference to mountains comes in a model prayer for the Eucharist, wherein the bread is said to have once been "scattered on the mountains" but

256. Varner, *Way of the Didache*, 11; Nessim, *Torah for Gentiles?*, chap. 1; Chris Thomas, "Didache."

257. "If thou hast not running water, baptize in some other water, and if thou canst not baptize in cold, in warm water; but if thou hast neither, pour water three times on the head." *Didache*, 7.2–3.

in Christ has "been brought together" to become one.[258] (Even here, however, physical geography could well point to other locations; Antioch, being on the Orontes River, for example, was likely rarely lacking for water, even in times of drought, and Asia Minor too has mountains.) Beyond physical geography, references regarding not praying or fasting in the same manner as "the hypocrites" cause many scholars to think the *Didache* would have had to have been written in an area where and at a time when Pharisaism was rife, which, of course, if one places the writing of Matthew in Antioch after the temple's destruction, fits the *Didache*'s composition right alongside it.[259]

The *Didache*, in fact, appears actually to pull much of its material from Matthew or Matthew from it.[260] In discussing the hypocrites, the author of the *Didache* tells readers that they should pray "as the Lord hath commanded in his gospel" and then recites the Lord's Prayer of Matthew 6:9–13, with one key difference near its end. Where Matthew denotes "for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory" (Matt. 6:13), the *Didache* notes only "for thine is the power, and the glory."[261] Other elements from Jesus's Sermon on the Mount, albeit often with slightly different wording, appear frequently throughout the *Didache*. Echoing Matthew 5:44, 46, 39, 41, and 40, in that order, for example, the writer of the *Didache* instructs readers: "Bless them that curse you, and pray for your enemies. Fast on behalf of those that persecute you; for what thank is there if ye love them that love you? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? . . . If any one give thee a blow on

258. *Didache*, 9.4.

259. *Didache*, 8.1–2; Slee, *Church in Antioch*, 92–93, 123; Nessim, *Torah for Gentiles?*, chap. 3; Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 23.

260. Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 82; O'Loughlin, *Didache*, 35; Varner, *Way of the Didache*, 44–45; Nessim, *Torah for Gentiles*?, chap. 1.

261. *Didache*, 8.2.

thy right cheek, turn unto him the other also, and thou shalt be perfect; if any one compel thee to go a mile, go with him two; if a man take away thy cloak, give him thy coat also."[262] Similarly, near the end of the *Didache*, the work seems to crib from Matthew 24 (or vice versa), as in this passage that echoes Matthew 24:11–12: "For in the last days false prophets and seducers shall be multiplied, and the sheep shall be turned into wolves, and love shall be turned into hate; and because iniquity aboundeth they shall hate each other, and persecute each other, and deliver each other up."[263] Scholars debate the reasons for the differences in wording between the *Didache* and Matthew. Some suggest that the former is paraphrasing the latter, while others suggest that both are drawing from some other early source.[264] In either case, the *Didache* explicitly notes that it is pulling much of its instruction from "the Gospel of our Lord."[265]

A final argument for the first-century dating of the *Didache* centers around its description of church hierarchy as it appears in chapters 11–13 and 15. The three earlier chapters describe a church that receives teachers, apostles, and prophets from afar, providing to the local congregation guidelines with regard to hosting the itinerants as well as a list of criteria by which to know whether these preachers are false or true. Chapter 15, by contrast, focuses on the selection of local bishops and deacons. Acts 13:1 notes that the early Antiochene church had many "prophets and teachers"; *Didache*, 15.1, notes that these local "bishops [overseers] and deacons [servants]" are to

262. *Didache*, 1.3–4.

263. *Didache*, 16.3–4.

264. Varner, *Way of the Didache*, 47, 46, 50–51; Slee, *Church in Antioch*, 62–76; John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, 89–91; Nessim, *Torah for Gentiles?*, chap. 2.

265. *Didache*, 15.4. Other references to the Gospel appear in 8.2, 11.3, and 15.3.

"perform for you the service of prophets and teachers." Some scholars see this comment as an explicit shift away from an earlier system, in which two new offices are replacing the old. In addition, for some scholars, the twofold description of local leaders also represents a transition toward a threefold hierarchy described by Ignatius's letter in which a single local bishop would be assisted by elders and deacons. Messianic Jewish scholar Daniel Nessim, for example, in defending his belief that the *Didache* was written around 80–85 CE, notes that Ignatius "did not seek to institute a church structure as in Did. 15. Rather, he sought compliance with an existing structure. Nor did he contend with a community beset by itinerant apostles, prophets, and teachers. . . . In Ignatius' letter to the Ephesians (4.1), he spoke of an established relationship between overseers and presbyters, and urged the Magnesians (3.1; 6.1) to honor those in both offices."[266]

Of course, there are numerous ways to read these contrasting guidelines regarding church organization in the *Didache*, any of which can lead one to place it in another location or time depending on one's other premises. John P. Meier, who believes firmly that the *Didache* relies on Matthew and that Matthew was written in Antioch during the late first century, for example, finds the *Didache*'s transitional government structure to be a reason it could *not* have been written in Antioch, because Matthew seems to attest to a different structure.[267] Michelle Slee, who believes the *Didache* was written during this time and that it did not rely on Matthew, believes the two documents present different factions of the church—one that had long accepted Gentiles into the fellowship (the bishops and deacons, in her reading, correspond to church patrons, who

266. Nessim, *Torah for Gentiles?*, chap. 2.
267. Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 82–84.

were often Gentiles) and one that was just beginning to accept them.[268]

New Testament accounts leave room for a *Didache* created much earlier than 70 CE, however, if one is to base that date solely on the church's early government structure. Passages in such earlier New Testament writings as 1 Corinthians 12:28 certainly refer to apostles, prophets, and teachers among the offices—or at the least, among the gifts or roles—present in the early church, as chapters 11–13 of the *Didache* do. However, elders, bishops, and deacons are mentioned in New Testament accounts of the early church as well. Often, these terms appear in New Testament books that many scholars consider to have been written pseudonymously after the temple's fall. As such, one might argue that the offices were anachronistically cast backward into the earlier church. Thus, we might wonder whether, in Acts, Paul and Barnabas actually "ordained them elders in every city" (Acts 14:23) or whether Paul actually "called the elders of the church" at Miletus (Acts 20:17) or whether the author of Acts assumed such a structure existed at these early times based on his experience of the church at a later time (or even imposed it on to early times to justify a structure newly established). Other references to elders in Acts, however, make clear its association with Jewish offices that predated the Christian church and that might well be a link to the early church's adoption of the term and position. Acts 4:5–6, for example, refers to Jewish "rulers, and elders, and scribes, and Annas the high priest . . . and as many as were the kindred of the high priest," one of three such mentions of elders in the chapter, the others being in verses 8 and 23. Just as elders among the Jewish people are often paired with the priests or scribes in Acts, so too is the term "elders" often paired with the apostles among the leaders of the Chris-

268. Slee, *Church in Antioch*, 106–113, 131, 148, 154, 162.

tian church (see, for example, Acts 6:12, 23:14, and 25:15 versus Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22–23, and 16:4).

Other New Testament works that many scholars see as being written later that use the terms "elder," "deacon," or "bishop" include 1 Peter and the pastoral epistles. The uses in these works suggest that some of the terms were interchangeable or intended more to express a function than a unique hierarchal office. Ephesians 4:11, for example, provides a listing of various roles similar to that in 1 Corinthians 12:28: "And he [God] gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." Notable new inclusions in the list are "evangelists" and "pastors." The latter comes from the Greek word for "shepherd" and is used elsewhere in an ecclesiastical sense in the New Testament only to refer to Jesus himself, as in Hebrews 13:20 and 1 Peter 2:25. Other passages make clear that the term "evangelist" can be used as a function, as in Acts 21:8, which notes that "Philip the evangelist . . . was one of the seven [deacons]" of Acts 6:5. Indeed, both the deacons Stephen and Philip prove to be powerful preachers, with Philip being one of the first to evangelize Samaria (Acts 8:5). As "evangelist" can be used to describe a function rather than an ordained office, so too do 1 Peter and the pastoral epistles use other terms interchangeably with "elder." The pastorals provide lists of qualifications for deacons (that is, servants) and bishops (that is, overseers). 1 Timothy 3:1 notes what "a bishop . . . must be," but later in the same letter, the author refers to "the elders that rule" (1 Tim. 5:17). The distance between the two references could give one room to argue that elders in the latter verse is referring to older people, but no such room exists in Titus's instructions, where the terms are clearly used synonymously: "ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless" (Tit. 1:5–7). 1 Peter 5:1

goes even further, accounting Peter the apostle as himself an elder: "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ." As such, these works suggest that elders and deacons were active at the same time as apostles, prophets, and teachers.

Even if one accepts the late dating many scholars assign to 1 Peter and the pastoral epistles, references to "bishops" or "elders" also appear in the Paul's letter to the Philippians and the epistle of James, both of which are generally considered to be among the earlier books written in the New Testament, well before 70 CE. As such, it seems likely that local elders were part of the church from the church's earliest days, even as itinerant prophets and apostles were regularly passing through congregations. In Philippians 1:1, for instance, Paul notes that he and Timotheus write to the church members at Philippi "with the bishops and deacons." Later in the same letter (Philip. 2:25), Paul refers to Epaphroditus as a messenger using the same Greek word that other scriptures translate as apostle, demonstrating the term's functional meaning. Likewise, James 5:14 refers to calling "for the elders of the church" to pray for the sick. The world of the *Didache*, then, does not seem to demand that a new church structure was coming into being, leaving its dating to be much more open than some scholars might claim.

Arguing against all these suppositions about the *Didache*'s time and place of creation is the idea that it was, in fact, not a static document. Rather, as a manual, it was constantly under revision, across time and location.[269] As such, any redaction of the *Didache* we have represents an amalgam of different times and places, albeit one cobbled

269. O'Loughlin, *Didache*, 20.

together for a particular setting.[270] We can see this in the way in which chunks of the *Didache* show up, with alterations, in later works, such as the third-century *Didascalia Apostolorum* or the fourth-century *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, both thought also to have originated in Syria.[271] Indeed, the *Didascalia* is said to have been modeled on the *Didache*, though it focuses almost entirely on liturgical practice.[272] Meanwhile, the *Constitutions*, which borrows extensively from the *Didascalia* for its first six books, reproduces in large part the first six chapters of the *Didache* in its book 7.[273] Those six chapters of the *Didache*, as already noted, reproduce elements of the ten commandments, with emphasis particularly on the last five and additional Matthean-sounding commentary. Interestingly, outside a general command to "love the God who made thee," the commandments toward God—the first four—seem mostly to be glossed over in favor of an emphasis on loving "thy neighbour as thyself."[274] Also absent is the command regarding honoring one's parents. At least one scholar, Aaron Milavec, has suggested that this is because of the work's intended audience: potential non-Jewish converts to Christianity.[275] As many of these converts likely were defying the wishes and commands of their families, who maintained worship to other gods, their heavenly Father, referenced particularly in chapters

270. Slee, *Church in Antioch*, 58; Varner, *Way of the Didache*, 56–57; Nessim, *Torah for Gentiles?*, chap. 2.

271. Introduction to *Didascalia*, Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/didascalia.html; Donaldson, "Introductory Notice to *Constitutions*."

272. Introduction to *Didascalia*.

273. Introduction to *Didascalia*; Varner, *Way of the Didache*, 13.

274. *Didache*, 1.2; Varner, *Way of the Didache*, 61.

275. On non-Jewish people as the primary audience, see Varner, *Way of the Didache*, 3; Slee, *Church in Antioch*, 52, 118; Nessim, *Torah for Gentiles*?, chap. 3.

1, 9, and 10, now replaced that which they had on earth.[276] Indeed, the first six chapters are written primarily to a singular "you" and often expand on the commandments in such a way that they seem focused on subjects that would have been particularly germane to a person coming from a non-Jewish background.[277] Under the commands not to kill or commit adultery, for example, believers are told, among other things, to "not corrupt youth," to "not practice sorcery," and to "not kill a child by abortion," all practices that would have been unusual in a Jewish setting but that would have been commonplace in a non-Jewish one.[278] Beginning with chapter 7, regarding baptism, the *Didache* switches to a plural "you," suggesting that the first part of the work was focused on what believers needed to do, believe, understand, and perhaps even memorize before they undertook this important rite of passage.[279] Indeed, chapter 7 even hearkens back, at the beginning of its instructions, to all that has come before by noting, "having recited all these precepts, baptize"; the next eight chapters then discuss the larger church's practices, in a way emphasizing how such a believer was to be integrated into them.[280]

Among the interesting changes between the "two ways" section of the *Didache* and the version preserved in the likely much later *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* is a

276. Aaron Milavec, *The Didache: Text, Translation, Analysis, and Commentary* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2003), 53; Varner, *Way of the Didache*, 62. For specific "Father" passages, see *Didache*, 1.5, 9.2–3, and 10.2.

277. Nessim, *Torah for Gentiles*?, chap. 3.

278. *Didache*, 2.2. On differing Roman and Jewish views regarding pederasty and abortion, see Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 233–236, 282–283, 294–295; on the importance of magic in Greco-Roman society, see Stephen Haar, *Simon Magus: The First Gnostic?* (New York: Walter De Gruyter, 2003), 138–139.

279. Varner, *Way of the Didache*, 58–59.

280. Varner, 14.

teaching that comes toward the end of the *Didache*'s chapter 6. Whereas the *Didache* tells followers, "If thou art able to bear the whole yoke of the Lord, thou wilt be perfect; but if thou art not able, what thou art able, that do," the *Constitutions* has no such command.[281] Rather, it tells followers, "If thou dost not turn out of the right way, thou wilt not be ungodly."[282] In this sense, the instructions preserved for the community in the *Didache*'s rendering suggest, perhaps, a greater expectation that converts attempt to adopt various Jewish traditions than was expected of those in the community for whom the *Constitutions* was rendered.[283] It is possible that the author was particularly concerned about Jewish purity rituals related to eating, as is evidenced by the fact that the very next instructions pertain to food. "Concerning meat, bear that which thou art able to do," the author of the *Didache* tells the reader. "But keep with care from things sacrificed to idols."[284] In this sense, the author reiterates a concern about meat expressed in the Acts 15 decision, one that is particularly interesting in light of Acts' reference to some of the sect of the Pharisees in the church (Acts 15:5) attempting to "put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear" (Acts 15:10). The *Constitutions* reiterates all three points noted in Acts 15:29—avoiding the eating of blood and fat, as well as food offered to idols—but without even a hint of concern regarding other Jewish traditions related to food.[285]

281. *Didache*, 6.2.

282. *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, 7.1.19, https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf07/anf07.ix.viii.i.html.

283. Nessim, *Torah for Gentiles?*, chap. 2.

284. *Didache*, 6.3.

285. *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, 7.2.20–21, https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf07/anf07.ix.viii.ii.html. Daniel Nessim, however, contends that the very fact that the *Didache* fails to mention the restrictions on eating blood and fat suggests the reference to the "yoke" is not related specifically to food or Acts 15 but rather to the whole

Another interesting difference comes in reference to the positions of authority in the church noted in the *Didache* versus the *Constitutions*. While the former notes just the aforementioned itinerant teachers, apostles, and prophets and the local bishops and deacons, the *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* adds a third term when describing the qualifications for locally ordained men: "bishops worthy of the Lord, and presbyters and deacons."[286] The supplementation of "presbyters" here, in addition to "bishops," suggests, for some scholars, a distinguishing of the two offices and the emergence of a growing hierarchical structure, evident only at a later date, which in turn verifies the way in which the information recorded in the *Didache* changed with time and place.[287]

Even the *Didache*'s apocalyptic ending chapter may reflect changes related to time and audience, as evidenced by other documents with similar content. William Varner

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Torah. Nessim, *Torah for Gentiles?*, chap. 10. Then again, there would have been no need to relist the restrictions on blood and fat if non-Jewish believers had been encouraged to maintain as much adherence to Jewish food laws as possible, including the oral ones, since the purchase of food likely would have been restricted to Jewish sources that had been ritually purified and tithed upon. For more on Pharisaical meal restrictions, see Jonathan Brumberg-Kraus, Susan Marks, and Jordan D. Rosenblum, "Ten Theses Concerning Meals in Early Judaism," chap. 1 in *Meals in Early Judaism: Social Formation at the Table*, ed. Susan Marks and Hal Taussig (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 13–39, esp. 24–25. Thus, non-Jewish followers would not have been purchasing meat from the "shambles" (1 Cor. 10:25), as Paul's early instructions had noted was acceptable, let alone directly from temples. The *Constitutions*' relisting of these terms thus suggests it was written for a community that was less wedded to Jewish traditions than that of the *Didache* was.

286. *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, 7.2.31.

287. Varner, *Way of the Didache*, 88. The *Didascalia*, too, references a "pastor who is appointed bishop and head among the presbytery in the Church in every congregation," as well as deacons. *Didascalia Apostolorum*, trans. R. Hugh Connolly (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), 4.2.1, Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/didascalia.html.

notes how the work seems to cut off rather abruptly with "the Lord coming on the clouds of heaven."[288] By referencing the parallel, but much fuller, passage in the *Constitutions*, which mentions the "kingdom of God, which is in Christ Jesus," and the judgment (the Lord is "to condemn the devil, the deceiver of the world, and to render to every one according to his deeds"), Varner theorizes that the original ending of the *Didache* included a discussion of the millennial rule of Jesus that was excised by later copyists and redactors, such as those who wrote the *Constitutions*, in favor of a more generic reference to 1 Corinthians 2:9 ("eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, such things as God hath prepared for them that love Him"), once belief in an earthly millennium fell out of favor in the third century.[289]

Another intriguing difference relates to the *Didache*'s commands with regard to fasting. In the *Didache*, believers are told to fast on the fourth and sixth days of the week to avoid fasting in the same manner as the hypocrites, who "fast on the second and fifth days of the week."[290] Both the *Didascalia* and the *Constitutions* provide further reasoning for this change of days, but with the focus now on the Passover season. No longer does the change in fast days relate as much to an avoidance of fasting with "hypocrites"—likely, Pharisaical Jews; rather, by the third and fourth centuries, the fast days relate primarily to the betrayal and death of Jesus. Believers are to fast on the Wednesday and Friday of the Passover week, the *Constitutions* notes, "the former on account of His being betrayed, and the latter on account of His passion."[291] The Sabbath, at this one time of the year,

288. *Didache*, 16.8; Varner, *Way of the Didache*, 11.

289. *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, 7.2.32; Varner, *Way of the Didache*, 100–101.

290. *Didache*, 8.1.

291. *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, 5.3.15, https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf07/anf07.ix.vi.iii.html.

also becomes a fast day in the community following the *Constitutions*: "But He appointed us to break our fast on the seventh day at the cock-crowing, but to fast on the Sabbath-day. Not that the Sabbath-day is a day of fasting, being the rest from the creation, but because we ought to fast on this one Sabbath only, while on this day the Creator was under the earth."[292] Likewise, in discussing the Passover week, the *Didascalia* directs believers,

> But (fast) not after the custom of the former People, but according to the new testament which I have appointed you: that you may be fasting for them on the fourth day of the week, because on the fourth of the week they began to destroy their souls, and apprehended Me. —For the night after the third of the week belongs to the fourth of the week, as it is written: There was evening and there was morning, one day. The evening therefore belongs to the following day: for on the third of the week at even I ate My Pascha with you, and in the night they apprehended Me. —But fast for them also on the Friday, because thereon they crucified Me, in the midst of their festival of unleavened bread.[293]

Similar differences are evident with regard to the Eucharist. In the *Didache*, the prayer offered with the Eucharist suggests that the ceremony is primarily one of thanksgiving and unity:

> After this fashion give ye thanks. First, concerning the cup. We thank thee, our Father, for the holy vine, David thy Son, which thou hast made known unto us through Jesus Christ thy Son; to thee be the glory for ever. And concerning the broken bread.

292. *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, 5.3.15.
293. *Didascalia Apostolorum*, 21.14.

> We thank thee, our Father, for the life and knowledge which thou hast made known unto us through Jesus thy Son; to thee be the glory for ever. As this broken bread was once scattered on the mountains, and after it had been brought together became one, so may thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth unto thy kingdom; for thine is the glory, and the power, through Jesus Christ, for ever.[294]

By the time that the *Didascalia* was written, however, the Eucharist was more closely associated with Christ's sacrifice, as it is said to be "the likeness of the royal body of Christ."[295] The *Constitutions* makes the connection even more explicit, reworking the prayer of the *Didache* this way:

> Concerning the eucharistical thanksgiving say thus: We thank Thee, our Father, for that life which Thou hast made known to us by Jesus Thy Son, by whom Thou madest all things, and takest care of the whole world; whom Thou hast sent to become man for our salvation; whom Thou hast permitted to suffer and to die; whom Thou hast raised up, and been pleased to glorify, and hast set Him down on Thy right hand; by whom Thou hast promised us the resurrection of the dead. Do thou, O Lord Almighty, everlasting God, so gather together Thy Church from the ends of the earth into Thy kingdom, as this corn was once scattered, and is now become one loaf. We also, our Father, thank Thee for the precious blood of Jesus Christ, which was shed for us and for His precious body, whereof we celebrate this representation, as Himself appointed

294. *Didache*, 9.1–4.
295. *Didascalia Apostolorum*, 26.6.22.

> us, "to show forth His death." For through Him glory is to be given to Thee for ever. Amen.[296]

Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 11:23–26 show that the bread and wine had an association with Jesus's death and with the Passover well before the end of the first century or the destruction of the temple. The accounts of Jesus's last supper in the Gospels suggest also that the practice was one associated in particular with Passover in the early New Testament church, certainly before the end of the first century, if one accepts only the late dates at which some scholars place the writing of the Gospel accounts, but quite possibly from the church's very start, if one accepts the eyewitness as valid ("With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer," Luke 22:15 quotes Jesus as saying at the meal). The absence of such metaphorical language in the *Didache*, of which the author would have almost certainly been aware, given Paul's statements about having received the metaphorical tradition from "the Lord" (1 Cor. 11:23), may suggest that the meal recounted in it was one not yet directly associated with Christ's Passover sacrifice but was rather a simple fellowship meal.[297] Bread and wine or water, after all, was a common meal of the day, and the prayers of the *Didache* could well have been from standard Jewish blessings rerendered for Christian purposes.[298] The *Didascalia* and the

296. *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, 7.2.35.

297. Matthew David Larsen, "Addressing the Elephant That's Not in the Room: Comparing the Eucharistic Prayers in 'Didache' 9–10 and the Last Supper Tradition," *Neotestamentica* 45, no. 2 (2011): 252–274, https://www.jstor.org/stable/43048808—see esp. 253, 257, 263; Varner, *Way of the Didache*, 75–76.

298. On bread and wine as staples of most meals in the Greco-Roman world, see Alikin, *Earliest History*, 58–59; P. Coutsoumpos, "Paul's Teaching of the Lord's Supper: A Socio-historical Study of the Pauline Account of the Last Supper and Its Graeco-Roman Background" (PhD thesis, University of Sheffield, 1996), 132; and Andrew McGowan, "Rethinking Eucharistic Origins," *Pacifica* 23 (June 2010): 184,

Constitutions, meanwhile, likely evidence the association fellowship meals came to have later with the Last Supper itself.

Whether or not the *Didache* was written in or near Antioch in the last decades of the first century, however, it, like Matthew, shows how Jewish practices continued to influence the church even as the church increasingly began to attempt to differentiate itself from such cultural origins. We see this in such examples as the aforementioned direction to fast on days different from those of the "hypocrites." The Christian community, as preserved in the *Didache*, in other words, aimed to maintain two fast days per week, as practiced by at least some Pharisees (Luke 18:12), even as they changed the days on which those fasts occurred. Some scholars have further postulated that the change to fast days reflects a change to the days on which Christians worshipped, usually with reference to *Didache*, 14.14, which mentions assembling on the "Lord's day of the Lord." If, the thinking goes, Christians had begun assembling instead on the first day of the week rather than the last, the fast days were also likely moved back one day to account for the extra day before assembly.[299] A literal rendering of the Greek, however, leaves much room for interpretation. The Greek in the pertinent passage simply states "on [the] Lord's of [the] Lord," a phrasing that others translate to mean "according to the Lord's instructions of the Lord."[300] Indeed, that rendering seems to make more

185. On Jewish blessings rerendered for Christian use, see Varner, *Way of the Didache*, 75–76; Larsen, "Addressing the Elephant," 263; and Slee, *Church in Antioch*, 96.

299. Varner, *Way of the Didache*, 77–78

300. Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Biblical Perspectives, 1993), 114–115; Frank W. Hardy, "The Lord's Day in the Didache," July 21, 2010, 6–7, Historicism.org, http://www.historicism.org/Documents/Didache.pdf; Toby Janicki, "The Day of the Lord: The Didache—Chapter 14; Which

sense contextually, given the writer's heavy subscription to other Jewish traditions and the fact that the passage falls within a body of other instructions.[301]

Another way Jewish traditions are preserved even as the author attempts to distance the Christian fellowship from them include the manner in which it adapts and reframes the Torah for Gentile believers. Already noted is the manner in which the "two ways" teaching builds off the second half of the ten commandments, adding Matthean commentary and regulations specific to the world from which Gentile adherents had come. Michelle Slee even comes to the conclusion that the "yoke of the Lord" line in *Didache*, 6.2, suggests that while the writer of the *Didache* believed that "Gentiles [did] not have to obey all of the Torah to enter the Didachist's community it is the opinion of the Didachist that to be perfect is to be Torah observant, and even Gentiles are expected to eventually reach perfection."[302] In other words, the "Didachist's stance is far more rigorous than that taken by the majority of believers in Antioch before the Jerusalem conference," insofar as Gentile members were expected "to have taken on full Law-observance before the eschatological age [that is, the day of judgment] had dawned," even if they were not expected to do so immediately.[303]

As with fasting and adherence to the law and Jewish oral traditions more generally, the eucharistic prayer of the *Didache* also shows contrary impulses toward and away from Jewish practice. Already noted is the way that the

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Day Is the Day of the Lord?," First Fruits of Zion, https://ffoz.org/discover/didache/the-day-of-the-lord.html; Bob Pickle, "Analysis of Common Quotations from the Church 'Fathers' Concerning the Lord's Day," Pickle Publishing, 2004, http://www.pickle-publishing.com/papers/sunday-fraud.htm.

301. Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 125–126; Janicki, "Day of the Lord."

302. Slee, *Church in Antioch*, 86.

303. Slee, 86, 101.

prayer appears to be an adaptation of Jewish thanksgiving meal prayers, the Birkat Hamazon, a "Messianic expression of the same old religion," as Matthew David Larsen puts it.[304] So while a Jewish person might recite after a meal something like, "Sovereign God of the universe, we praise You: Your goodness sustains the world. You are the God of grace, love, and compassion, the Source of bread for all who live; for Your love is everlasting. In Your great goodness we need never lack for food; You provide food enough for all. We praise You, O God, Source of food for all who live," such ideas would have been transformed into an acknowledgment of the blessing provided by the coming of the Messiah: "Thou, Almighty Master . . . hast given both meat and drink, for men to enjoy, that we might give thanks unto thee, but to us thou hast given spiritual meat and drink, and life everlasting, through thy Son."[305] At least one Jewish prayer of blessing mandated that only adult males be present, which would find a parallel expression in the *Didache*'s restriction that only baptized members could eat the meal, a restriction reminiscent also of that at

304. Larsen, "Addressing the Elephant," 263.

305. "Daily Blessings: Birkat HaMazon (Grace after Meals)—Short Version," Reform Judaism.Org: Jewish Life in Your Life, https://reformjudaism.org/beliefs-practices/prayers-blessings/daily-blessings-birkat-hamazon-grace-after-meals-short-version; *Didache*, 10.3. Although the Jewish prayer recited here may not date to the first century—indeed, one issue with quoting any instructions from the oral traditions recorded in the Mishna or modern Jewish practice is the fact that such recording began only in the second century, long after Christianity's formation—the existence of standard and model prayers at the time of Jesus is testified to even in the New Testament (see, for example, Matt. 6:7–13). English translations of the Jewish prayer instructions preserved in the Berakoth are available online: Berakoth, trans. and ed. Maurice Simon and Isadore Epstein, https://www.halakhah.com/berakoth/index.html; and Tractate Berakoth, trans. A. Lukyn Williams (New York: Macmillan, 1921), Internet Sacred Text Archive, https://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/tbr/index.htm. Dating for Mishna from Cohen, *From the Maccabees*, 246.

the Passover, which dictated that only those who were circumcised could partake of it (Ex. 12:48).[306] The *Didache*'s stated reason for such a restriction, however, would come, not from the Old Testament, but from the Matthean tradition that one should "give not that which is holy unto dogs" (Matt. 7:6).[307] Similarly and more generally, while Jewish practice mandated prayer three times a day, so too would the *Didache*.[308] In each case, what's evident is a Christian community adapting Jewish customs to a new spiritual and cultural reality, simultaneously moving away from its Jewish origin while preserving pieces of it.

Also preserved in the *Didache* is a concern similar to Matthew's with false teachers. In addition to the reference to false prophets at the end of the age that mimics Matthew 24, the *Didache* devotes its eleventh chapter entirely to discerning between itinerant preachers who are purveyors of false teaching and those who are true representatives of the Way. The writer of the *Didache* includes, not just obvious instructions such as "if the teacher himself turn and teach another doctrine with a view to subvert you, hearken not to him" or "if he do not what he teacheth [he] is a false prophet," but also notes how long teachers should stay and from where they should draw their subsistence.[309] One who stays longer than three days, the writer notes, "is a false prophet," as is one who asks "for money" and not just bread, unless he talks "concerning others that are in need that ye should give unto them."[310] The ideas are compelling in a context in which Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians writes of his having "kept [him]self from being burdensome unto" the Corinthian church that he might "cut off occasion from them which desire occa-

306. Varner, *Way of the Didache*, 77; *Didache*, 9.5.
307. *Didache*, 9.5.
308. *Didache*, 8.3.
309. *Didache*, 11.2, 11.10.
310. *Didache*, 11.5, 11.6, 11.12.

sion" (2 Cor. 11:9, 12), even as he would take up a collection for "the ministering to the saints" (2 Cor. 9:1), and in which the second epistle of Peter would reference false teachers, out of greed, making "merchandise" of believers (2 Pet. 2:1–3). As such, the *Didache* suggests it was written in an environment in which traveling ministries were common but also not necessarily trustworthy.

The Letters of Ignatius

Concerns with false teachers and teachings, as well as opposing trajectories with regard to Jewish practice, would continue into the early second century, as the letters of the Antiochene bishop Ignatius evidence, even as the temple's destruction and Jerusalem's central position in governing the church faded into history. With Ignatius's letters, too, however, readers are confronted with a set of contradictory assertions regarding the time of writing and even the authenticity of the Ignatian texts. Indeed, little is known about Ignatius outside the letters credited to him.[311] Various later traditions claim that he was one of the children who sat on Jesus's lap (Matt. 18:1–4; Mark 9:36, 10:13; Luke 18:15) and that he knew one or more of the apostles Peter, Paul, and John.[312] The first mention of his letters appears in the second-century bishop of Smyrna Polycarp's letter to the Philippians, and a vague reference to the incidents

311. Thomas A. Robinson, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 1–2; Walter H. Wagner, *After the Apostles: Christianity in the Second Century* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 141.

312. Ryan Erlenbush, "October 17, Feast of St. Ignatius of Antioch," *New Theological Movement*, October 16, 2013, http://newtheologicalmovement.blogspot.com/2013/10/st-ignatius-of-antioch-child-who-is.html; Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 9; Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 2, "I. Life of Ignatius"; John Bonaventure O'Connor, "St. Ignatius of Antioch," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 7 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910), New Advent, http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07644a.htm.

recounted in the letters is made in book 5 of Irenaeus's late second-century *Against Heresies*.[313] A thorough description of many of the letters—the seven most often accepted as authentic—appears in Eusebius's *Church History*, which, as noted previously, also lists Ignatius as the bishop of Antioch after Evodius.[314] According to the narrative preserved in his letters, Ignatius was the victim of some sort of descension that involved the Antioch church, a conflict that ultimately led Roman imperial authorities to step in and condemn Ignatius to death. Ignatius's execution, however, was to take place not in Antioch but rather in Rome, where wild beasts were to tear him apart, likely for the entertainment of spectators at the Roman Colosseum. The seven letters described by Eusebius recount Ignatius's journey from Antioch to Rome through Asia Minor, where Ignatius wrote to various church congregations about his upcoming martyrdom, encouraging them to remain faithful regarding various doctrinal matters.[315]

There are, in fact, as many as fifteen letters that were at one time attributed to Ignatius. Of these, eight have come to be seen as spurious. They include letters to the Tarsians (in southern Italy); the Antiochenes; Hero, a deacon in Antioch and successor as bishop to Ignatius; the Philippians; Mary, a proselyte in Neapolis (in northern Greece); and

313. Polycarp, *Epistle to the Philippians*, trans. J. B. Lightfoot, chap. 13, Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/polycarp-lightfoot.html; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.28.4, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/irenaeus-book5.html.

314. Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.36.

315. Summaries of Ignatius's life as per the letters can be found in Eusebius, *Church History*. 3.36.3–11; Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 10–12; Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 215; Wagner, *After the Apostles*, 141–142. His life is also recounted in *The Martyrdom of Ignatius*, a work most scholars believe dates to the fifth century at the earliest and that, because of its many contradictions to the letters and unhistorical statements, is considered spurious. Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 2, "Sources."

Mary, the mother of Jesus, as well as two letters to John the presbyter. In addition are two other letters *to* Ignatius, both also considered spurious: one from Mary the mother of Jesus and one from Mary the proselyte.[316] All the pseudonymous letters, save those involving John and Mary the mother of Jesus, are included with the seven generally accepted letters in the oldest fully extant manuscripts we have, which also include the longest of three versions, or forms, of the letters.[317] The long versions are, unfortunately, one of three (or more) versions that exist, creating further questions not only as to the genuineness of the letters but as to which versions are the authentic originals.[318] That the long versions, preserved in Latin and Greek, share various thematic and linguistic features with what most scholars now consider inauthentic works has helped encourage most critics to reject them, claiming that the additional material comes from a much later era—likely the fourth

316. *Spurious Epistles of St. Ignatius of Antioch*, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, from *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, N.Y.: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight, New Advent, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0114.htm.

317. Jack W. Hannah, "The Setting of the Ignatian Long Recension," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 79, no. 3 (September 1960): 221–222; "St Ignatius: Different Versions of a Christian Letter Collection," Cahaeresearch: Research in Classics, Ancient History, Archaeology and Egyptology at the University of Manchester, https://clahresearch.wordpress.com/2019/12/10/st-ignatius-different-versions-of-a-christian-letter-collection/; Cyril C. Richardson, "Manuscript and Books," in *The Letters of Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch*, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. 1, trans. and ed. Cyril C. Richardson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), Christian Classics Ethereal Library, https://www.ccel.org/ccel/richardson/fathers.vi.ii.ii.html; O'Connor, "St. Ignatius of Antioch."

318. The claim of more than three versions is made by Markus Vinzent, "Ignatius of Antioch: A Mystery Martyr," chap. 5 in *Writing the History of Early Christianity: From Reception to Retrospection* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 266–464, esp. 349, 365.

century, when the *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* was written, possibly by the same person.[319] Indeed, as we will see, the long versions contain doctrinal explanations and ideas that conform well with those contained in the *Constitutions*.

In addition to the long versions, there are also middle-length and short ones. The short versions, preserved only in Syriac, include just three letters—those to Polycarp, the Ephesians, and the Romans.[320] Most scholars have come to consider these abridgments of the original letters, but as the scholar Marcus Vinzent has shown, the short versions share much of their phrasing not just with the middle-length versions most scholars now accept as authentic but also uniquely with the long versions, suggesting that the short versions may be closer to the original, from which the middle and long were competing expansions.[321] The middle-length versions come to us from Latin and Greek. The Latin collection that includes the seven middle-length versions contains a total of sixteen letters to and from Ignatius (dropping Philippians but adding the letters with John and Mary the mother of Jesus), while the Greek col-

319. O'Connor, "St. Ignatius of Antioch"; Hannah, "Setting"; Markus Vinzent, "Traditions of Paul and the Ignatian Letters," chapter 6 in *Resetting the Origins of Christianity: A New Theory of Sources and Beginnings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 260; Fritz Guy, "'The Lord's Day' in the Letter of Ignatius to the Magnesians," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 2, no. 1 (1964): 3, https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/auss/vol2/iss1/1.

320. Vinzent, "Ignatius of Antioch," 266; "St Ignatius," Cahaeresearch; Richardson, "Manuscript and Books."

321. Vinzent, "Ignatius of Antioch," 266–464, esp. 277, 349, 363–364; Vinzent, "Traditions of Paul," 266–267. For a short example—the use of names in the three versions of the letters—see Markus Vinzent, "Name-Dropping in Ignatius of Antioch (Short, Middle, and Long Recension," *Markus Vinzent's Blog*, September 23, 2017, http://markusvinzent.blogspot.com/2017/09/name-dropping-in-ignatius-of-antioch.html; names are also discussed in Vinzent, "Ignatius of Antioch," 395–402.

lection contains just nine, with the ninth letter (Tarsians) cut off near its end, suggesting that part of the collection is missing.[322] In both collections, of course, are the seven letters most often accepted as real: those to Polycarp, the Smyrnaeans, the Philadelphians, the Romans, the Trallians (in western Asia Minor), the Magnesians (also in western Asia Minor), and the Ephesians. These are the letters referenced by Eusebius, thus the reason they are the most generally accepted as real; however, our oldest complete texts of the letters, printed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, date to the fourth or fifth century and reproduce the long versions.[323] The complete middle-length versions, from an eleventh-century manuscript, weren't discovered and published until the seventeenth century, and the short version until the nineteenth.[324]

As such, until the last few centuries the long versions were actually the ones circulated most often as the authentic.[325] The modern preference for the middle-length versions stems at least in part from the fact that early quotations from the Ignatian letters more often reflect their text than that of the longer-length ones. The seventeenth-century archbishop James Ussher, who first popularized the authenticity of the middle-length versions, pointed out, for example, that "three medieval English writers

322. J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, part 2: *S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp*, vol. 1 (London: Macmillan, 1885), 73–74, 80–81.

323. Lightfoot, 103.

324. James M. Rochford, "Ignatius of Antioch," Evidence Unseen, https://www.evidenceunseen.com/theology/historical-theology/ignatius-of-antioch/; Richardson, "Manuscript and Books"; Guy, "'Lord's Day' in the Letter," 4.

325. Guy, "'Lord's Day' in the Letter," 3; Vinzent, "Ignatius of Antioch," 375–376; Vinzent, "Traditions of Paul," 277. Indeed, Eusebius's mention of just seven of the letters does not necessarily guarantee that the other letters preserved with those in the earliest manuscripts were not part of the original collection, since Eusebius may have had reasons only to mention those letters that suited his purposes. "St Ignatius," Cahaeresearch.

quoted a version of Ignatius quite different from that of their contemporaries" and "used only the seven letters known to Eusebius, and [that] their quotations from those letters were more abbreviated than those appearing in later church fathers and in medieval and post-Reformation writers."[326] Furthermore, those quotations often corresponded to those of Eusebius and the fifth-century theologian Theodoret.[327] Eusebius's quote from *Smyrnaeans*, for example, runs like this: "But I know and believe that he was in the flesh after the resurrection. And when he came to Peter and his companions he said to them, Take, handle me, and see that I am not an incorporeal spirit. And immediately they touched him and believed," which corresponds closely to the middle-length version of Ignatius's letter.[328] By contrast, the long version of Ignatius's letter reads this way:

> And I know that He was possessed of a body not only in His being born and crucified, but I also know that He was so after His resurrection, and believe that He is so now. When, for instance, He came to those who were with Peter, He said to them, "Lay hold, handle Me, and see that I am not an incorporeal spirit." "For a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have." And He says to Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger into the print of the nails, and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side"; and immediately they believed that He was Christ.[329]

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326. Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 6–7.

327. Brent, 7. The Eusebian quotations, from Ignatius's letters to the Romans and the Smyrnaeans, can be found in *Church History*, 3.36.7–9, 12.

328. Eusebius, *Church History* 3.36.12; *Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans*, 3.1–2.

329. Ignatius, *Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans*, long version, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, chap. 3, Early Christian

In addition, unlike many other early Christian works Eusebius references, Eusebius does not make any comment regarding the letters' disputed authenticity, suggesting that his contemporaries wholly accepted the letters.[330]

Some scholars, however, see the short versions as the more authentic and call into question all but the three letters preserved in those short versions. Reasons for this include the fact that the seven-letter collection appears to preserve "several elements of early Christianity . . . found neither in the writings of the New Testament nor in other testimonies from the first or early second century."[331] Among these are a much clearer independence of Christianity from nascent Judaism, a highly organized church centered around a single bishop, and the reorientation away from the Sabbath to Sunday; such features find form elsewhere only later in the second century, with the writings of Justin Martyr and Irenaeus.[332] As such, Ignatius's three-letter collection seems more in keeping with other writings of the time; only when the seven-letter collection is taken as being written in the early first century does Ignatius become our first witness, several decades before anyone else, to such changes in the church. Indeed, scholars who frame the first three letters alone as authentic point also to the fact that all quotations from the Ignatian letters up until the time of Eusebius come from these three, even if the text of the quotations themselves are preserved in the same form in the short and middle-length versions.[333] Irenaeus, for example, in his work *Against Heresies*, quotes from Ignatius's letter to the Romans, "As a certain man of ours said, when he was condemned to

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Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/ignatius-smyrnaeans-longer.html.

330. Guy, "'Lord's Day' in the Letter," 5–6.
331. Vinzent, "Traditions of Paul," 264.
332. Vinzent, 263–264.
333. Vinzent, 272.

the wild beasts because of his testimony with respect to God: 'I am the wheat of Christ, and am ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may be found the pure bread of God'"[334]—a quote that appears in all three versions of Ignatius's letter. Origen quotes from *Smyrnaeans*, which is not part of the three-letter collection, but interestingly he attributes the quote to a different author, suggesting, as Markus Vinzent notes, that the creator of the seven-letter collection may have borrowed segments from others' writings or that those writings only later came to be associated with Ignatius.[335]

Such issues raise the specter that perhaps all the letters were written much later than Ignatius is supposed to have met his martyrdom sometime during the first two decades of the second century—that is, that none of the letters are, in fact, genuine. Shortly after J. B. Lightfoot, in the nineteenth century, published what has largely become the definitive case for the authenticity of the middle-length version of the seven letters mentioned by Eusebius, William P. Killen registered his disagreement in a short book titled *The Ignatian Epistles Entirely Spurious*.[336] In it, Killen raised several objections, among them the fact that Ignatius is not mentioned until nearly a century after his supposed death—the reference in Polycarp's letter to the Philippians notwithstanding.[337] Irenaeus's aforementioned quote, for example, is said to be by "a certain man of ours," demonstrating perhaps Irenaeus's uncertainty about the

334. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.28.4; Ignatius, *Ignatius to the Romans*, trans. J. B. Lightfoot, 4.1, *Apostolic Fathers* (1891), Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/ignatius-romans-lightfoot.html.

335. Vinzent, "Traditions of Paul," 274.

336. William P. Killen, *The Ignatian Epistles Entirely Spurious: A Reply to the Right Rev. Dr. Lightfoot* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1886), available at Project Gutenberg, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/8908/8908-h/8908-h.htm.

337. Killen, 104.

origin of the letters.[338] And though Polycarp's letter mentions Ignatius and his letters, Killen points out, the person is likely a different one.[339] For one, for the Ignatian letter to Polycarp to be genuine, Polycarp's letter to the Philippians would have had to be written near the same time, meaning that Polycarp, who probably died around 169 CE, would have written the letter when he was a young man as opposed to when he was a wizened church sage who would more normally be called on to settle disputes among the local community, as he seems to be doing in his letter.[340] (Killen believes Polycarp's letter better fits the year 161, when Rome had two kings and when "a reign of terror was inaugurated.")[341] The Ignatius mentioned by Polycarp, rather than being from Antioch, is from Philippi, and he writes his letters from that city rather Smyrna and Troas, as the Ignatian letters claim.[342] (Indeed, Killen proposes that the letters going to Syria from Ignatius, referenced in Polycarp's letter, are going not to Syrian Antioch but to an entirely different Syria, an island in the Aegean Sea named Psyria, much closer to Philippi.)[343] Another proof Lightfoot used, a satire written by Lucian in the late second century that seems to be based on the letters, could have easily been a satire of any such figure, including the apostle John; indeed, the letter writer may well have based the letters on Lucian's satire rather than the other way around.[344]

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338. Killen, 125–126; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.28.4; Vinzent, "Traditions of Paul," 273–274.

339. Killen, *Ignatian Epistles Entirely Spurious*, 107.

340. Killen, 104, 124; on dating Polycarp's death, see Killen, 114–115, 120–123.

341. Killen, *Ignatian Epistles Entirely Spurious*, 105–106. Killen bases this claim on Polycarp's reference to plural "kings and powers and princes and them that persecute and hate you and for the enemies of the cross." Polycarp, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 12.3.

342. Killen, *Ignatian Epistles Entirely Spurious*, 106.

343. Killen, 110.

344. Killen, 101; Vinzent, "Ignatius of Antioch," 364.

Ignatian Letters

The earliest extant complete manuscripts exist in multiple forms and contain varying selections of letters. The terms short, middle, and long recension usually refer to the forms, or versions, of the letters.

	Long Form (Greek)	Long Form (Latin)	Middle Form (Greek)	Middle Form (Latin)
Ephesians	•	•	•	•
Polycarp	•	•	•	•
Romans	•	•		•
Magnesians	•	•	•	•
Philadelphians	•	•	•	•
Smyrnaeans	•	•	•	•
Trallians	•	•	•	•
Spurious Letters				
Antiochenes	•	•		•
Hero	•	•		•
Mary at Neapolis	•	•	•	•
Philippians	•	•		
Tarsians	•	•		•
Mary the mother of Jesus				•
John the presbyter 1				•
John the presbyter 2				•
Mary the mother of Jesus to Ignatius				•
Maria the proselyte to Ignatius	•		•	•

Source: J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, part 2: *S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp*, vol. 1 (London: Macmillan, 1885), 72–74, 80–81, 103, 118.

Note: The spurious letters are preserved in one length/version only, though they appear, to varying degrees, in the early manuscripts containing the long and middle-length versions of the seven generally accepted authentic letters. Lightfoot, 71. Although six of the spurious letters likely appeared by the sixth

	Short Form (Syriac)	Short Collection	Middle Collection	Long Collection
Ephesians	•	•	•	•
Polycarp	•	•	•	•
Romans	•	•	•	•
Magnesians			•	•
Philadelphians			•	•
Smyrnaeans			•	•
Trallians			•	•
Spurious Letters				
Antiochenes				•
Hero				•
Mary at Neapolis				•
Philippians				•
Tarsians				•
Mary the mother of Jesus				
John the presbyter 1				
John the presbyter 2				
Mary the mother of Jesus to Ignatius				
Maria the proselyte to Ignatius				•

century, the letters with John and Mary the Mother of Jesus are likely dated to the twelfth century. Cyril C. Richardson, "Manuscript and Books," in *The Letters of Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch*, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. 1, trans. and ed. Cyril C. Richardson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), Christian Classics Ethereal Library, https://www.ccel.org/ccel/richardson/fathers.vi.ii.ii.html.

As such, Killen sees the Ignatian letters as the product of Callistus, the bishop of Rome around 219 CE, as part of a conspiratorial attempt to prop up a doctrine of hierarchical church government, centered around Roman bishops, that had emerged over the course of the second century.[345] To this point, Killen notes various parallels between Callistus's biography and Ignatius's choice of metaphors: references to slavery and imprisonment—Callistus had been a slave and a prisoner; references to finance—Callistus had operated a bank; references to graves—previous to his bishopric, Callistus had overseen the Christian catacombs in Rome.[346] Furthermore, Killen claims, Ignatius's letter to the Romans appears to have frequently circulated separately, quite possibly emerging first and opening the way for later letters.[347] Of Origen's three quotes from the letters, one is notably from the letter to Rome, and as noted before, one other quote, from *Smyrnaeans*, Origen attributes to another writer.[348] The letters' emerging in the early third century would fit well also with various historical concerns. Ignatius's obsession with martyrdom corresponds with a peak of interest in the subject that occurred

345. Killen, *Ignatian Epistles Entirely Spurious*, 133.

346. Killen, 137. On slavery, see *Ignatius to the Romans*, 4.3; on being a convict, see *Ignatius to the Ephesians*, 12.1; on banks, see *Ignatius to Polycarp*, 6.2; on graveyards, see *Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans*, 5.2, and *Ignatius to the Philadelphians*, 6.1. Such references, however, seem hardly so unique or overwhelming that they would require someone having served in these capacities to have written about them. Jesus, too, used slaves and banks to make metaphorical points. See, for example, Matthew 18:23–34 and 25:27.

347. Killen, *Ignatian Epistles Entirely Spurious*, 134.

348. Killen, 139; Vinzent, "Traditions of Paul," 274. Killen actually notes that two of the quotes are from the letter to the Romans, but in fact one of the quotes is from his letter to the Ephesians. Origen quotes *Ignatius to the Romans*, 7.2, in his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, 2.36; he quotes *Ignatius to the Ephesians*, 19.1, in his *Homilies on Luke*, 6.4. Vinzent, "Ignatius of Antioch," 282; Rochford, "Ignatius of Antioch."

in the late second century, following the death of Polycarp and the rise of the Montanist sect, which promoted passivity in the face of martyrdom among its various tenets.[349] The Roman bishop Victor's attempt to excommunicate the churches of Asia Minor at the turn from the second to the third century for failing to bend to his views with regard to the commemoration of Passover versus Easter would also have given strong reason to promote the primacy of the bishops—and most especially that of Rome's.[350]

If, however, we see the Ignatian letters as part of the set of thirteen found in some of the earliest manuscripts of the fourth or fifth centuries (ignoring those of Mary the mother of Jesus and John the apostle, which clearly emerged only in the Middle Ages, and brought the letter total to seventeen), the works rest within a body of literature that is introduced by a letter from Mary the proselyte.[351] That letter focuses on the subject of young ministers, arguing for the use to which God has put young people throughout the scriptures. As such, Ignatius's communication with what would have been a young Polycarp fits within a theme established from the very start of the collection. Even if we accept Mary's letter as a fourth-century invention, integrating the earlier letter to Polycarp would have still suited the author's purpose. Indeed, Killen's claim that Polycarp could only have written his letter as an old man seems dubious when we consider that Jesus himself and many of his disciples were likely comparatively young men in their twenties and thirties. Furthermore, many, if not

349. Killen, *Ignatian Epistles Entirely Spurious*, 135; John Chapman, "Montanists," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 10 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911), New Advent, http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10521a.htm.

350. Killen, *Ignatian Epistles Entirely Spurious*, 136–137.

351. Vinzent, "Ignatius of Antioch," 377. Mary's letter was dropped from collections sometime between the tenth and seventeenth centuries, though curiously Ignatius's reply to her was often left intact. Vinzent, 269, 372–373, 377.

most, scholars believe Polycarp died not in 169 but around 155, which would have made him another decade older—in his thirties or forties—when in contact with Ignatius than Killen estimates.[352] Similarly, many scholars believe that Ignatius was pointing not to a historical reality with regard to bishoprics but to an idealized church order that was emerging at the time of his writing and that his letters were in fact in part written to help foster.[353] Allen Brent, for example, makes much of the fact that while Ignatius often calls others in Asia Minor "bishops," he never calls himself such (except in the long version).[354] As such, that the letters were written in the early second century is not a historical impossibility.

This becomes even more possible if only the three short Syriac letters are considered authentic, since those letters drop many of the concerns present in the other and longer versions of the letters. Although the heavy emphasis on martyrdom remains in Ignatius's letter to the Romans, and the call to submit to the bishop remains in his letter to the

352. See, for example, Francis Joseph Bacchus, "St. Polycarp," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 12 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911), http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12219b.htm; introduction to "St. Polycarp of Smyrna," Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/polycarp.html; "Polycarp: Aged Bishop of Smyrna," *Christianity Today*, https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/martyrs/polycarp.html; Ken Curtis, "Who Was Polycarp?" Christianity.com, May 3, 2010, https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1-300/polycarp-11629601.html#google_vignette.

353. Thomas A. Robinson, although not a supporter of this idea, provides a full summary and critique of it, in his *Ignatius of Antioch*, 95–102, 190

354. Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch*, esp. 12–13, 77–78, 149–151. That said, Ignatius *does* call himself the shepherd of the church in Antioch in his letter to the Romans, even in the middle-length version, in a way that certainly seems to confirm that he thought of himself as a bishop: "Remember in your prayers the church which is in Syria, which hath God for its shepherd in my stead." *Ignatius to the Romans*, 9.1.

Ephesians (though softened) and to a lesser extent in that to Polycarp, the texts contain no anti-Jewish polemic and no call to stop observing the Sabbath—or as Marcus Vinzent puts it: "Christian cult practice is not framed in terms of an antithesis between the law of Jesus (the 'new man') and the Jewish law of Moses as the old way of life, as it is in the seven-letter collection. In addition, there is no application of the Jewish typology of priesthood or high priesthood to Christian church offices."[355] What's more, the choice of Ignatius, an obscure reference in Polycarp's own letter, seems an odd choice as the subject for a pseudonymous author attempting to promote certain doctrinal changes, unless such letters had an earlier established seed from which to draw their authorial reputation.[356]

What we find then is scholars placing the Ignatian letters as being written all over the second century—and various versions of them into the third through fifth centuries.[357] Some scholars even take the view that the portions of Polycarp's letter mentioning Ignatius are themselves forgeries or that Polycarp's letter indeed does date from a time when he was an older man and that the Ignatian letters emerged only after that, sometime in the second half of the second century.[358] No matter, the position scholars take with regard to the timing of the writing of the letters and the degree to which they can be accepted as the product of a man who is, in fact, visiting churches in Asia Minor on his route toward martyrdom in Rome often reflect the scholars' own position with regard to the doctrines espoused in the letters, be it concepts of the deity

355. Vinzent, "Traditions of Paul," 268.

356. Trebilco, *Early Christians in Ephesus*, 632.

357. Jonathan Lookadoo, "The Date and Authenticity of the Ignatian Letters: An Outline of Recent Discussions," *Currents in Biblical Research* 19, no. 1 (2020): 88–114, esp. 89, 101, doi:10.1177/176993X20914798; Vinzent, "Ignatius of Antioch," 271.

358. Lookadoo, "Date and Authenticity," 90, 93, 102.

of Jesus, Jewish-Christian relations, church government, or any other number of matters.[359] Many who reject the early rise of church hierarchy, for example, and especially a single bishop heading individual congregations or cities, reject the letters, while those who support such a position often find the letters a useful witness to their cause.[360] Indeed, such arguments have been raging since the Protestant Reformation.[361]

If we take the view that at least some portions of the letters reflect the writings of a real person experiencing real events that he narrates, the question then arises as to when the first versions of the letters were written and what the cause of the troubles in Antioch recounted in the letters was. Possible early dates for the writing of the letters include 105–113, 114–117, and 130–135 CE.[362] Reasons for a date around 105–113 include the fact that 107 CE is the date Eusebius provides in his *Chronicon*; the date, however, is not reliably precise.[363] As such, some scholars posit as late as 113 (or conversely a bit earlier) as close enough and reflecting the date of Pliny the Younger's letter to the

359. Lookadoo's "The Date and Authenticity of the Ignatian Letters" presents an excellent summary of how different scholarly positions reflect the ideas that individual scholars have with regard to what teachings might have been present at any particular time.

360. For a popularized Roman Catholic defense of the letters as witness to early church structure, see Joe Heschmeyer, "How Do We Know Ignatius' Letters Are Genuine?," *Shameless Popery*, July 19, 2017, https://shamelesspopery.com/ignatius-letters-are-genuine/; for a popularized anti-Catholic claim that the letters are all forgeries meant to justify one-bishop rule, see "The 15 Forged Letters of Ignatius," The Interactive Bible, https://www.bible.ca/history-ignatius-forgeries-250AD.htm.

361. Killen, *Ignatian Epistles Entirely Spurious*, 95; Richardson, "Manuscript and Books"; O'Connor, "St. Ignatius of Antioch."

362. Vinzent, "Traditions of Paul," 260; Lookadoo, "Date and Authenticity," 89, 94–101.

363. Trebilco, *Early Christians in Ephesus*, 630–631; Lookadoo, "Date and Authenticity," 99; Lightfoot, *S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp*, 30.

emperor Trajan wherein Pliny recounted ordering the execution of Christians in Pontus and Bithynia in northern Asia Minor.[364] In such a reckoning, Ignatius's martyrdom, as ordered from Antioch, becomes part of a pattern of persecution by local Roman governments during the time of Trajan.[365] The 114–117 CE date corresponds well with an earthquake in Antioch that Downey dates to December 13, 115, and that John Malalas cites as the occasion for Ignatius's sentencing, after Ignatius insulted the emperor.[366] In this reckoning, Ignatius's martyrdom relates to Christians being blamed as the cause of the disaster due to their refusal to worship the local Antiochene gods.[367] And finally, a few scholars have proposed around 135, insofar as Ignatius's itinerary over land through Asia would have fit well with the victory procession after the emperor Hadrian's defeat of the Bar Kokhba revolt in Judea.[368] This last date places Ignatius's letters only a couple of decades from second-century developments in Christianity attested to by Justin Martyr. Indeed, at least one scholar claims that the long versions of the letters date not to the fourth cen-

364. Trebilco, *Early Christians in Ephesus*, 630–631; Thomas A. Robinson, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 192–193; Pliny the Younger to the Emperor Trajan, letter 97.

365. Thomas A. Robinson, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 192–193.

366. Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 213, 292; Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 19–20; Malalas, *Chronography*, 11.276. Brent finds the claim doubtful and Malalas's account likely spurious. Indeed, Malalas makes the claim in the context of denoting that the Parthians invaded Antioch before Trajan's campaign in Parthia and that the Antiochenes staged a revolt that allowed Trajan's return, an event recounted nowhere else and that likely conflates events before the Roman Empire's invasion of Parthia with the Parthian invasion of Antioch that followed nearly five decades later. Malalas, 11.271–273; Downey, 213n58.

367. Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 213, 292–293; Lookadoo, "Date and Authenticity," 98–99; Wallace-Hadrill, *Christian Antioch*, 5.

368. Lookadoo, "Date and Authenticity," 101. Brent notes that the transportation of criminals overland for use in spectator sport in Rome was not unusual and thus would not necessitate that Ignatius be transported as part of a war procession. Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 15.

tury but precisely to this period, some twenty to thirty years after the apparent originals.[369] As such, the long versions would become extensions, rewritings, in response to the events under Hadrian, accounting for the anti-Jewish polemic not present in the extant short versions.

Although an earthquake in Antioch or more pervasive Christian persecution might account for Ignatius's sentencing, the question remains as to why Ignatius specifically—and not a slate of others—was sent to Rome for execution rather than killed locally and as to what the troubles were in the Antioch church to which Ignatius refers and which persisted, but were eventually settled, after his departure. That other Christians were sent along with Ignatius is a possibility, insofar as Polycarp's letter to the Philippians mentions two others traveling with him, Zosimus and Rufus, whom Polycarp hints may be dead. They "ran not in vain," he states, have received their "due place in the presence of the Lord," and "loved not the present world," although as noted earlier, all three are referenced as coming from Philippi, not Syria.[370] Such does not preclude the possibility that others also were executed in Antioch itself and that Ignatius was sent to Rome because of his unique position as bishop or as the main promoter of the bishopric.[371] As to the troubles, Ignatius cryptically notes in the letters to the Philadelphians and Polycarp, toward the end of his time in Asia Minor, that his prayers have been answered insofar as "it hath been reported to me that the church which is in Antioch of Syria hath peace."[372]

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369. Hannah, "Setting."

370. Polycarp, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 9.1–2.

371. Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 215, 293.

372. Ignatius, *Ignatius to the Philadelphians*, trans. J. B. Lightfoot, 10.1, from *Apostolic Fathers* (1891), Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/ignatius-philadelphians-lightfoot.html. See also Ignatius, *Ignatius to Polycarp*, trans. J. B. Lightfoot, 7.1, from *Apostolic Fathers* (1891), Early Christian Writings,

These comments have caused many scholars to hypothesize that the troubles were within the church itself. For Allen Brent, among others, the troubles revolved specifically around Ignatius's promulgation of single-bishop rule in the church, which many, in this view, had remained unwilling to accept. In this theory, the controversy created so much dissension that the Roman government itself stepped in to quell the conflict.[373] Only after Ignatius offered himself up, essentially as a sacrifice, were the parties brought to reconciliation, in part likely out of guilt for bringing about Ignatius's condemnation.[374] Such a proposition, however, raises questions as to why the parties wouldn't have reconciled earlier, given that Ignatius's trial in itself would have likely been disconcerting to the warring parties in the Christian community, or why, after the parties had been brought to peace, Ignatius insisted on going through with martyrdom, even if authorities could be brought to bear to grant him clemency. Before the reconciliation, for example, we find him begging the Roman church to

> not . . . be men-pleasers but to please God. . . . For neither shall I myself ever find an opportunity such as this to attain unto God, nor can ye, if ye be silent, win the credit of any nobler work. For, if ye be silent and leave me alone, I am a word of God; but if ye desire my flesh, then shall I be again a mere cry. [Nay] grant me nothing more than that I be poured out a libation to God. . . . I exhort you, be ye not an unseasonable kindness to me. Let me be given to the wild beasts, for through them I can

https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/ignatius-polycarp-lightfoot.html.

373. Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch*, esp. 22, 30, 42. See also Thomas A. Robinson, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 96, 190.

374. Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 45. See also Thomas A. Robinson, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 185.

> attain unto God. . . . If I shall suffer, it was your desire; if I shall be rejected, it was your hatred.[375]

The peace changes little with regard to Ignatius's resignation to his fate and desire to die for Christ. After learning that peace has been restored to the church, Ignatius writes to Polycarp, "I myself also have been the more comforted since God hath banished my care; if so be I may through suffering attain unto God, that I may be found a disciple through your intercession."[376] Likewise, to the Smyrnaeans, he notes of his soon-coming death, "By the Divine will was this vouchsafed to me, not of my own complicity, but by God's grace, which I pray may be given to me perfectly, that through your prayers I may attain unto God."[377]

A better clue to the actual cause of the troubles in Antioch perhaps rests in Ignatius's letter to the Smyrnaeans, if indeed the letter is genuine. In it, Ignatius asks his addressees, in a passage regarding those who believe Jesus's miracles, death, and resurrection "were done by our Lord in semblance," "Why then have I delivered myself over to death, unto fire, unto sword, unto wild beasts?"[378] Ignatius espouses a similar argument in his letter to the Trallians, where he asks, "If . . . He [Christ] suffered only in semblance . . . , why am I in bonds?"[379] In other words, Ignatius was attempting to counter teachings regarding docetism, a branch of Gnostic belief that claimed that Jesus had not

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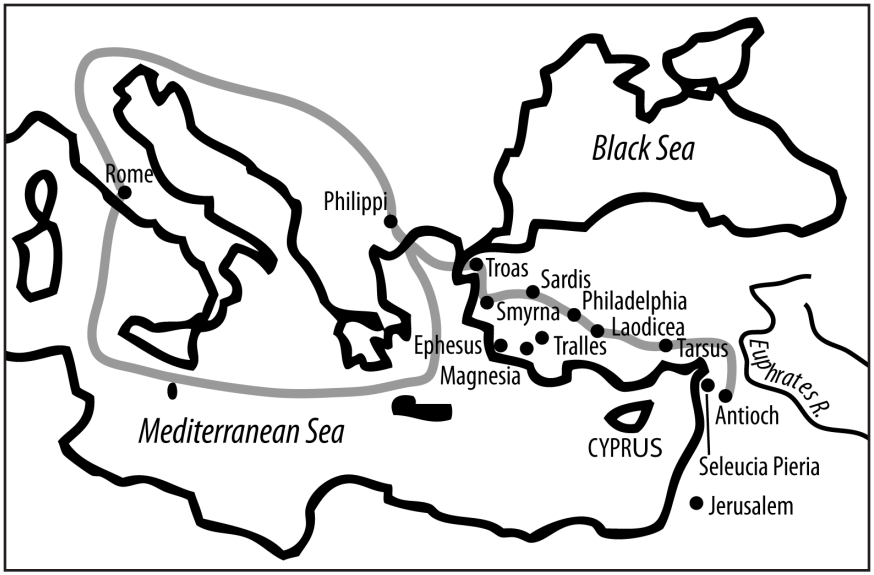
375. *Ignatius to the Romans*, 2.1–2, 4.1, 8.3. See also Thomas A. Robinson, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 185, 196.

376. *Ignatius to Polycarp*, 7.1

377. Ignatius, *Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans*, trans. J. B. Lightfoot, 11.1, from *Apostolic Fathers* (1891), Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/ignatius-smyrnaeans-lightfoot.html.

378. *Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans*, 4.2.

379. Ignatius, *Ignatius to the Trallians*, trans. J. B. Lightfoot, 11.1, from *Apostolic Fathers* (1891), Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/ignatius-trallians-lightfoot.html.



Possible routes of Ignatius's journey

It is unknown whether Ignatius travelled from Philippi overland to Rome or oversea.

come in literal flesh but had rather come in the similitude of it or had taken on someone else's body while remaining himself wholly spirit. In this way, Jesus had not actually suffered and died but rather had merely appeared to. Such was a belief that John had also contended with not many years earlier, as evidenced in his letters to the church. "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God," he would note in his first letter (1 John 4:3). John's recommendation to readers then had been that "if there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house" (2 John 10). So likewise would Ignatius warn his readers: "I watch over you betimes to protect you from wild beasts in human form—men whom not only should ye not receive, but, if it were possible, not so much as meet [them]; only pray ye

for them, if haply they may repent."[380] As with those John faced, who he notes "went out from us; but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (1 John 2:19), so in Ignatius's day some "abstain[ed] from eucharist (thanksgiving) and prayer, because they allow[ed] not that the eucharist is the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ, which flesh suffered for our sins, and which the Father of his goodness raised up."[381] That such believers did not actually abstain from fellowship meals and meeting but rather had set up their own is implied by a directive Ignatius gives shortly later in the same letter: "Let no man do aught of things pertaining to the Church apart from the bishop. Let that be held a valid eucharist which is under the bishop or one to whom he shall have committed it. Wheresoever the bishop shall appear, there let the people be; even as where Jesus may be, there is the universal Church. It is not lawful apart from the bishop either to baptize or to hold a love-feast."[382]

In the context of such division, Ignatius's plea for unity in the middle-length version of his letter to the Ephesians, makes a great deal of sense. "I congratulate you who are closely joined with him [the Ephesian bishop Onesimus]," Ignatian writes them, "as the Church is with Jesus Christ and as Jesus Christ is with the Father, that all things may be harmonious in unity."[383] If some who were preaching a different understanding of whom Jesus was had created so much trouble for the church in Antioch that the church was splintering, it follows that Ignatius wished to warn those with whom he was coming into contact in Asia Mi-

380. *Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans*, 4.1.
381. *Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans*, 6.2.
382. *Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans*, 8.1–2.
383. *Ignatius to the Ephesians*, 5.1.

nor of the trouble that might well come their way as well, indeed as had already occurred back in John's day. "But I have learned that certain persons passed through you from yonder," Ignatius wrote to the Ephesians, after hearing of what had been occurring in the local surroundings, "bringing evil doctrine; whom ye suffered not to sow seed in you, for ye stopped your ears, so that ye might not receive the seed sown by them."[384] Remaining in fellowship with the bishop, for Ignatius, was central to the process of staying true to the doctrines of the greater church so that what was happening in Antioch would not happen in Ephesus. "Whosoever therefore cometh not to the congregation," Ignatius continues, "he doth thereby show his pride and hath separated himself; for it is written, 'God resisteth the proud.' Let us therefore be careful not to resist the bishop, that by our submission we may give ourselves to God."[385] Likewise, Ignatius urged the church "to meet together more frequently" that the "powers of Satan" be "cast down; and his mischief cometh to nought in the concord of your faith."[386]

That Antioch had been an hotbed of docetic teaching—and more generally, Gnostic teaching—from fairly early on is likely, as evidenced in a legend that sprang up around one of the church's first deacons, "Nicolas, the proselyte of Antioch" (Acts 6:5). The legend, first preserved in Clement of Alexandria's *Stromata*, recounts how Nicolas "had a lovely wife. When after the Saviour's ascension he was accused before the apostles of jealousy, he brought his wife into the concourse and allowed anyone who so desired to marry her. For, they say, this action was appropriate to the saying: 'One must abuse the flesh.'"[387] In other words,

384. *Ignatius to the Ephesians*, 9.1.
385. *Ignatius to the Ephesians*, 5.3.
386. *Ignatius to the Ephesians*, 13.1.
387. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 3.4.26, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/clement-stromata-book3-english.html.

Nicolas is said to have professed a radical asceticism, "inculcating," as the late second-century historian Hippolytus of Rome put it, "indifferency of both life and food."[388] Such teachings were apparently upheld by his children, insofar as "his daughters continued in a state of virginity until old age, and his son remained uncorrupt."[389] Others, however, took such teachings regarding the desire not "to serve two masters, pleasure and God," in the opposite direction, as an excuse to indulge "in the gravest enormity" and to "commit fornication without shame," the idea being that if the flesh was to be abused, debased, discounted, then whatever physical actions in which one engaged did not matter.[390] In essence, Nicolas became associated with the sect of the Nicolaitanes, mentioned in Revelation 2:6 and 2:15, whether he was the outright founder of the sect or simply the namesake adopted by it. With a view that espoused such an extreme divergence between the physical and the spiritual, Nicolas, Hippolytus notes, "departed from the correct doctrine" and was "a cause" of corresponding views among others that the spiritual Christ from above could have had nothing to do with the physically embodied Jesus other than to have "descended upon him" at the time of his baptism by John the Baptist.[391]

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388. Hippolytus of Rome, *Refutation of All Heresies*, 7.24, Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/hippolytus7.html.

389. Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.29.3.

390. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 3.4.26, 3.4.25; Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.29.2.

391. Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*, 7.24. Hippolytus writes of various theories regarding the divinity of Christ. Theodotus of Byzantium espoused an adoptionist view of Jesus—namely, that he was a mere man whom God adopted—that is, whom God made into God—at his baptism or at his resurrection. Some followers apparently rejected the idea that Jesus was ever made into God but rather espoused that God as Christ inhabited Jesus for a time. Such was the view of a second Theodotus (this one, a banker) of whom Hippolytus wrote.

Such views with regard to Christ's physical irreality found subtle voice in a work called the *Gospel of Peter* that we know had some following in Rhossus, near Antioch, near the end of the second century, because Serapion, bishop of Antioch at the time, felt compelled to write a treatise against it, after discovering the congregation's use of the work.[392] In what fragments survive of the gospel, Jesus, while resting on the cross, is said to have "kept silence, as one feeling no pain" and rather than being noted as dying is said to have been "taken up."[393]

Another teacher who proved to be popular in Antioch was Menander, a disciple of Simon the magician, the latter of whom is referenced in Acts 8:9–24 as having proclaimed himself among the Samaritans, at one point, to be "the great power of God" (Acts 8:10) and whom, after baptism, Peter refused to anoint because of his attempt to purchase the Holy Spirit. From Menander came the teacher Saturninus, a resident of Antioch during the early second century. Both Menander's and Saturninus's teachings apparently mirrored much of what Simon had taught. Although Menander did not himself claim to be the "great power," he did claim to be "the person . . . sent forth from the presence of the invisible beings as a saviour, for the deliverance of men."[394] Both Menander and Saturninus, like Simon, promoted the idea that the world was made by angels emanating from the Father.[395] The incompetence of

392. Eusebius, *Church History*, 6.12.

393. *Gospel of Peter*, trans. M. R. James, 1.4.10, 1.5.17, from *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/gospelpeter-mrjames.html.

394. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1.23.5, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/irenaeus-book1.html.

395. Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*, 7.16; Henry Wace and William C. Percy, eds., "Menander," *Dictionary of Christian Biography: And Literature to the End of the Sixth Century A.D., with an Account of the Principal Sects and Heresies* (London: John Murray, 1911; rpt., Pea-

those angels had led them to make humans in such a manner that they lacked the ability to transcend their physical abode—indeed, even to live.[396] In his mercy, the Father had provided humans with a spark of life, which returned to the Father upon death while the physical decayed.[397] The Father had also sent Christ, "unbegotten and incorporeal, and devoid of figure" but "manifested as man in appearance only," so as to deliver humans completely into the spiritual realm, in part because the angels, one of them being the god of the Jews, proved jealous of the Father's power and sought to keep humans imprisoned in bodily form.[398] As such, "marriage and procreation" were espoused as coming from fallen angels as a means of continuing the bondage;[399] asceticism, by contrast, offered one the opportunity to renounce the flesh and scale to the spiritual state. In this way, the resurrection became not a literal rising of the body but a freeing of the spirit from the body.[400] That such teachings continued to hold sway in Antioch over the years that followed is evidenced by the manner in which the names of other later teachers, who espoused similar docetic teachings, such as Basilides, arise in the long versions of Ignatius's letters, one of the signs that those versions, at the least, derive from a date later than the first two decades of the first century.[401]

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body, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), Christian Classic Ethereal Library, https://www.ccel.org/ccel/wace/biodict.html?term=Menander; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1, 23.5, 1.24.1.

396. Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*, 7.16; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1.24.1.

397. Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*, 7.16; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1.24.1.

398. Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*, 7.16; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1.24.2. Quotes are from Hippolytus.

399. Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*, 7.16.

400. Wace and Percy, "Menander."

401. See *Ignatius to the Trallians*, long recension, chap. 12. Hannah notes that even so, such names do not require the long versions to have been written much later than 130. Hannah, "Setting," 226.

Another possible source of persecution and division described in the Ignatian letters is one reminiscent of issues arising in the Gospel of Matthew—and indeed in Luke's Acts of the Apostles: certain Jewish sectors. The two letters in which Ignatius polemicizes most—and most directly—against Jewish practices are those written to the Magnesians and the Philadelphians. Near the midpoint of the latter letter, he warns his readers, "If any one propound Judaism unto you, hear him not: for it is better to hear Christianity from a man who is circumcised than Judaism from one uncircumcised."[402] The contrast here between the Jewish and the non-Jewish suggests that Jewish believers (that is, the circumcised) still forged a significant portion of the church but that, ironically, certain non-Jewish believers were beginning to take on Jewish customs. Indeed, Thomas A. Robinson sees the non-Jewish believers not so much as God-fearers at a Jewish synagogue but as people whose initial attraction had been to Christianity, which in turn eventually led them to the Jewish faith as it was being espoused by certain teachers who, in some manner, rejected Jesus.[403] Ignatius's warning regarding "Judaism" comes within a longer context in which Ignatius contrasts the Old Testament scriptures with knowledge of Jesus Christ, insofar as he compares the "priests [who] were good" with the "better . . . High-priest to whom is committed the holy of holies; for to Him alone are committed the hidden things of God."[404] Some apparently were inclined not to believe something "in the Gospel" if they found "it not in the charters [the ancients]."[405] Ignatius goes to pains to note that the prophets are to be treasured, like the apostles, insofar as "they too pointed to the gospel."[406] The prophets "set

402. *Ignatius to the Philadelphians*, 6.1.
403. Thomas A. Robinson, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 61, 66.
404. *Ignatius to the Philadelphians*, 9.1.
405. *Ignatius to the Philadelphians*, 8.2.
406. *Ignatius to the Philadelphians*, 5.2.

their hope on Him and awaited Him; in whom also having faith they were saved in the unity of Jesus Christ."[407] The emphasis, throughout the letter, on unity in Christ (and submission to the bishop) as opposed to contention and schism thus appears to be related in some way to people espousing a preference for older scriptures as opposed to "Jesus Christ, the inviolable charter [of his cross] . . . and His death and His resurrection, and faith through Him."[408] In other words, those who were threatening to create a schism in Philadelphia appear to have been pulling away from the main body of the church to follow after "older" customs.

A similar problem appears to be at the center of Ignatius's letter to the Magnesians. In that letter, he tells his readers that "it is monstrous to talk of Jesus Christ and to practise Judaism. For Christianity did not believe in Judaism, but Judaism in Christianity."[409] That he feels a need to tell the readers this stems from his desire for them to "be on . . . guard betimes, that ye fall not into the snares of vain doctrine."[410] Those snares, for the Magnesians, appear to be related to Jewish teachings that were being proffered among some in the church, teachings that likely mirrored some of what Paul had been reacting to among the Antiochenes in Galatians. As Paul would write to the Galatians, "I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:3–4), so Ignatius would tell the Magnesians that "if even unto this day we live after the

407. *Ignatius to the Philadelphians*, 5.2.

408. *Ignatius to the Philadelphians*, 8.2.

409. Ignatius, *Ignatius to the Magnesians*, trans. J. B. Lightfoot, 10.3, from *Apostolic Fathers* (1891), Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/ignatius-magnesians-lightfoot.html.

410. *Ignatius to the Magnesians*, 11.1.

manner of Judaism, we avow that we have not received grace."[411] The nature of those Jewish practices some were attempting to add to Christian teaching, however, is somewhat unclear. In another passage that many use to show the church Ignatius addressed had since adopted Sunday as the day of worship and assembly instead of the Jewish Sabbath, Ignatius states,

> The divine prophets lived after Christ Jesus. For this cause also they were persecuted. . . . If then those who had walked in ancient practices attained unto newness of hope, no longer observing sabbaths but fashioning their lives after the Lord's day, on which our life also arose through Him and through His death which some men deny—a mystery whereby we attained unto belief, and for this cause we endure patiently, that we may be found disciples of Jesus Christ our only teacher—if this be so, how shall we be able to live apart from Him?[412]

The context here, however, renders questionable the idea that Ignatius was critiquing the mere observance of the seventh-day Sabbath in favor of Sunday (the Lord's day), for as noted above, it is clear that he is discussing how Israel's ancient prophets pointed to Jesus; as such, it seems dubious that Ignatius was stating that the prophets had left off observing the Jewish Sabbath to fashion their lives after Sunday.[413] The more important issue at stake for Ignatius does not appear to be days of the week but rather

411. *Ignatius to the Magnesians*, 8.1.

412. *Ignatius to the Magnesians*, 8.2–9.2. The idea that Ignatius promoted Sunday as the primary day of worship, though often one among many, is espoused in such works as Alikin, *Earliest History*, 88; Henk Jan de Jonge, "The Origins of the Sunday Eucharist," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 92, no. 4 (2016): 559, doi: 10.2143/ETL.92.4.0000000; and Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 71.

413. Guy, "'Lord's Day' in the Letter," 13.

the manner of worship—that is, that the prophets had ceased to look at the Sabbath in a purely legalistic way and had instead come to fashion their lives after the hope of Jesus's day.[414] Indeed, some translator's render the "Lord's day" line as, "fashioning their lives after the Lord's life," a reading that is possible from the Greek manuscripts but not from the Latin manuscripts, the result, likely, of the thirteenth-century Latin translator's easy assumption that "Lord's day" was a reference not to the Lord's time or life but to an actual day of the week, that is, Sunday, as the phrase had come to signify by the time the translation was made.[415]

That the church of Antioch and the East continued to observe the Sabbath and interpreted this passage quite differently is evident from the long version of the letter. There, the comparison is rendered much more clearly:

> The prophets were His servants, and foresaw Him by the Spirit, and waited for Him as their Teacher, and expected Him as their Lord and Saviour, saying, "He will come and save us." Let us therefore no longer keep the Sabbath after the Jewish manner, and rejoice in days of idleness; for "he that does not work, let him not eat." For say the [holy] oracles, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread." But let every one of you keep the Sabbath after a spiritual manner, rejoicing in meditation on the law, not in relaxation of the body, admiring the workmanship of God, and not eating things prepared the day before, nor using lukewarm drinks, and walking within a prescribed space, nor find-

414. Guy, 14, 13.
415. Guy, 8, 11.

> ing delight in dancing and plaudits which have no sense in them.[416]

Here Ignatius clearly takes issue not so much with the mere keeping of the Sabbath but with the strict Jewish manner in which some observed it—prescribed distances for travel, limitations on food preparation, and the like. That the writer of the long version of the Ignatian letter observed the Sabbath alongside Sunday is made plain in the passage that then follows: "And after the observance of the Sabbath, let every friend of Christ keep the Lord's Day as a festival, the resurrection-day, the queen and chief of all the days [of the week]. Looking forward to this, the prophet declared, 'To the end, for the eighth day,' on which our life both sprang up again, and the victory over death was obtained in Christ."[417]

Such practices appear to match those espoused in the fourth-century *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, where believers are told "every Sabbath-day excepting one [the Passover, the day of the Lord's death], and every Lord's day, hold your solemn assemblies, and rejoice."[418] Indeed, one finds in the *Constitutions* record of a prayer similar in concept to the language that appears in the long version of Ignatius's letter to the Magnesians like so:

> O Lord Almighty Thou hast created the world by Christ, and hast appointed the Sabbath in memory thereof, because that on that day Thou hast made us rest from our works, for the meditation upon Thy laws. . . . We solemnly assemble to celebrate the feast of the resurrection on the Lord's day,

416. *Ignatius to the Magnesians*, long recension, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, chap. 9, Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/ignatius-magnesians-longer.html.

417. *Ignatius to the Magnesians*, long recension, chap. 9,

418. *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, 5.3.20.

> and rejoice on account of Him who has conquered death, and has brought life and immortality to light. . . . Thou didst enjoin the observation of the Sabbath, not affording them [the Israelites] an occasion of idleness, but an opportunity of piety, for their knowledge of Thy power, and the prohibition of evils. . . . For the Sabbath is the ceasing of the creation, the completion of the world, the inquiry after laws, and the grateful praise to God for the blessings He has bestowed upon men. All which the Lord's day excels, and shows the Mediator Himself, the Provider, the Lawgiver, the Cause of the resurrection, the First-born of the whole creation, God the Word.[419]

References to practices like that recorded above, alongside certain linguistic cues, are what cause most scholars to believe the long version of the Ignatian letters were rendered by someone writing at the same time that the *Constitutions* was assembled, perhaps by the very same person.[420]

Regardless, what becomes plain in the Ignatian letters, if indeed a version of the seven can be dated authentically to the early second century, is that issues regarding docetism and Pharisaical Jewish practices were at the top of Ignatius's mind as he traveled through Asia Minor on his way toward martyrdom in Rome. As such, their heavy presence in the letters suggests that the problems in the church at Antioch to which Ignatius alludes had to do with these two matters.[421] If the church was facing persecution

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419. *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, 7.2.36.

420. Lightfoot, *S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp*, 228, 236, 250–254; Milton P. Brown Jr., "Notes on the Languages and Style of Pseudo-Ignatius," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 83, no. 2 (June 1964): 149–150. Brown points specifically to idiosyncratic vocabulary and common theological terminology and mannerisms.

421. If there be any historical basis to the pseudo-Ignatian *Epistle to the Antiochians*, it is interesting that it too dwells on these two

as a result of an earthquake, persecution brought about by followers of the local gods and perhaps furthered by an antagonistic Jewish population, angered by Christian nonadherence to Pharisaic customs, Ignatius's warnings make a great deal of sense. The docetists, as professors of the insubstantially of Jesus and of the worthlessness of the flesh or of sacrifices made in the flesh, would have felt no need to die for the faith. The temptation to break from the main body of the church, indeed, to break from the recognized orthodox elders, by adopting a docetic way of thinking to escape persecution would have been great, as would have the temptation to adopt Jewish customs to better fit within a Jewish diaspora community that was, in the wake of the temple's destruction, increasingly beholden to rabbinical customs. The situation would have echoed that which the Jewish people (perhaps even primarily Jewish Christians) had endured at the time of Antiochus some thirty to fifty years earlier. The peace that had been restored to the church in Antioch of Syria, as such, would have had to do with the Roman government ending its hunting down of Christians—most especially the ringleaders of the group—at the urging of locals and, thus, the end of the temptation among members to follow teachers professing other means of dealing with the persecution. Indeed, in the let-

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themes. "Reject every Jewish and Gentile error," that author writes, "and neither introduce a multiplicity of gods, nor yet deny Christ under the pretence of [maintaining] the unity of God." *Epistle to the Antiochians*, chap. 1, in *Spurious Epistles of St. Ignatius*. Chapter 5 of the same letter explicates the issues at stake, cataloging the Jewish, Gnostic (à la Menander and Saturninus), and docetic views of Jesus: "Whosoever, therefore, declares that there is but one God, only so as to take away the divinity of Christ, is a devil, and an enemy of all righteousness. He also that confesses Christ, yet not as the Son of the Maker of the world, but of some other unknown being, different from Him whom the law and the prophets have proclaimed, this man is an instrument of the devil. And he that rejects the incarnation, and is ashamed of the cross for which I am in bonds, this man is antichrist."

ter to the Smyrnaeans, Ignatius specifically notes the Antiochene believers, now at peace, "have recovered their proper stature, and their proper bulk [or constitution or governing body] hath been restored to them."[422]

That peace, in turn, allowed Ignatius to request that Polycarp "elect some one among you who is very dear to you and zealous also, who shall be fit to bear the name of God's courier—to appoint him . . . that he may go to Syria and glorify your zealous love unto the glory of God," and similarly to request that the Philadelphians "appoint a deacon to go thither as God's ambassador, that he may congratulate them [the Antiochenes] when they are assembled together, and may glorify the Name."[423] We do not know whether anyone was ever sent. Polycarp in his letter to the Philippians notes his intent to go to Syria, partly at Ignatius's behest, carrying letters from Philippi, "if [he] get[s] a fit opportunity, either [he him]self, or he whom [Polycarp] shall send to be ambassador on [the Philippians'] behalf also,"[424] though as noted earlier the geography posed here draws into question whether the Ignatius to which Polycarp refers is the same as the one in the Ignatian letters. If Ignatius's and Polycarp's letters bear testimony one of another, however, they demonstrate an ongoing communication and logistics network among and between the second-century churches in Greece, Asia Minor, and Syria—and indeed, given Ignatius's letter to Rome, the Italian peninsula also—one in which news, warnings of trouble, and even personnel were shared across geographical territory well into the second century. In this sense then, the early church appears to have been well organized and also well aware of what constituted heresy versus correct teaching

422. *Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans*, 11.2.
423. *Ignatius to Polycarp*, 7.2; *Ignatius to the Philadelphians*, 10.1.
424. Polycarp, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 13.1.

and of who constituted the descendants of true apostolic teachers and who did not.

Such would not remain the case, as the differing versions of the Ignatian letters, each adapted for a specific rhetorical and regional purpose, likely demonstrate. Thus, as noted earlier, a short version contains no anti-Jewish polemic and a soft tone when it comes to discussing the need to submit to the bishop; a long version adds context that befits the doctrines of a fourth-century Eastern and Syrian church; while a middle-length version fails to include such context, allowing more easily for anti-Jewish and anti-Sabbatarian interpretations, alongside a heavy emphasis on the need to submit to a bishop in each congregation. Indeed, such emphases fit well the later purposes of a Roman church looking to impose its will on churches in other regions. Although the Ignatian letter to Rome is the single letter that does not focus on a bishop, suggesting that Rome, at the time, did not have a single bishop as its head, Ignatius's tone is the most ingratiating among the six churches that he writes.[425] The church of Rome, for him, is "worthy of God, worthy of honour, worthy of felicitation, worthy of praise, worthy of success, worthy in purity, and having the presidency of love."[426] Indeed, he even suggests that Rome was the city in which Peter and Paul once dwelt: "I do not enjoin you, as Peter and Paul did. They were Apostles, I am a convict."[427] As such, questions as to when the Ignatian letters were actually written and whether they represent the true words of Ignatius are per-

425. Trebilco, *Early Christians in Ephesus*, 684–685. On Roman church organization at the time, see Bruce, *New Testament History*, 418–419. *The Shepherd of Hermas*, written in the early second century, references in Rome "the elders that preside over the Church." *The Shepherd of Hermas*, trans. J. B. Lightfoot, vision 2, 4[8].3, Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/shepherd-lightfoot.html.

426. *Ignatius to the Romans*, 0.0.

427. *Ignatius to the Romans*, 4.3.

haps not as important as what they represent: a concern with distinguishing the Christian faith from Jewish and Gnostic alternatives and the use of a hierarchical church structure to ensure such definition. Whether this occurred in Antioch at the start of the second century or later in the same century, it happened—and the motivations remained the same.

If Eusebius's account of the church in Antioch is correct, the next bishop of Antioch was Hero, a deacon in the Antiochene church according to the pseudo-Ignatian letter addressed to him.[428] Little beyond a name is known about Hero, but if the letter bears any trace of truth, Ignatius had tutored his successor for the new role and, perhaps, given that Ignatius calls Hero his son, even originally introduced him to the faith and baptized him: "You know in what way I have brought you up," pseudo-Ignatius writes. "Though I am the least of men, seek to follow me, be an imitator of my conduct. I do not glory in the world, but in the Lord. I exhort Hero, my son; 'but him that glories, glory in the Lord.'"[429] From the letter, one gets the sense of a very orderly transfer of authority within the congregation:

> Keep in safety that deposit which I and Christ have committed to you, and do not judge yourself unworthy of those things which have been shown by God [to me] concerning you. I hand over to you the Church of Antioch. I have commended you to Polycarp in the Lord Jesus Christ. . . . Be strong, therefore, O Hero, like a hero, and like a man. For from henceforth you shall lead in and out the people of the Lord that are in Antioch, and so "the congrega-

428. Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.36.15, 4.20.1; *Epistle to Hero, a Deacon of Antioch*, greeting, in *Spurious Epistles of St. Ignatius*.

429. *Epistle to Hero*, chap. 6.

> tion of the Lord shall not be as sheep which have no shepherd."[430]

The seven accepted letters, however, present no such evidence of a clean transfer of authority within the Antiochene church. In fact, in his letter to the Romans, Ignatius suggests something quite different. With his absence, he notes, "Jesus Christ alone shall be its [Antioch's] bishop—He and your love," a major reason he asks for prayers for those in Syria.[431] It could be that Ignatius was handing the Antiochene church over to a deacon for safekeeping with no intention of placing—or no authority to do so alone—Hero into the position Ignatius was apparently vacating, but none of the seven letters even mention Hero, which seems odd. It is as if the author of the letter to Hero aims to present a history that is consistent with the church as it has become in his own time, much as Eusebius does with his list of Antiochene bishops.[432] This is evident also in the way that the author of the letter to Hero emphasizes similar themes as those expressed in the seven generally accepted letters:

> Every one that teaches anything beyond what is commanded, though he be [deemed] worthy of credit, though he be in the habit of fasting, though he live in continence, though he work miracles, though he have the gift of prophecy, let him be in your sight as a wolf in sheep's clothing, labouring for the destruction of the sheep. If any one denies the cross, and is ashamed of the passion, let him be to you as the adversary himself. Though he gives all his goods to feed the poor, though he remove mountains, though he give his body to be burned,

430. *Epistle to Hero*, chaps. 7–8.
431. *Ignatius to the Romans*, 9.1.
432. Eusebius, *Church History*, 4.20.1.

> let him be regarded by you as abominable. If any one makes light of the law or the prophets, which Christ fulfilled at His coming, let him be to you as antichrist. If any one says that the Lord is a mere man, he is a Jew, a murderer of Christ.
>
> . . . Do nothing without the bishops; for they are priests, and you a servant of the priests. They baptize, offer sacrifice, ordain, and lay on hands; but you minister to them, as the holy Stephen did at Jerusalem to James and the presbyters.[433]

Gnostics and Jews are not welcome and have never been; the bishop is the means by which heresy is withheld from the church as has been from the beginning, or at least from the time of Ignatius. So suggests this letter, written in Ignatius's name but from a much later period.

Roman Tensions with the Jewish People in the Second Century

During the last years of or shortly after Ignatius's time in Antioch, around 117 CE, the Roman government, under the Emperor Trajan, would use the city as a staging area for the empire's invasion of Parthia. The invasion would prove a temporary success, but it would also bring with it another uprising among the Jewish people, this time in Egypt, the modern-day area of Libya, and Cyprus.[434] The cause of the uprising is a matter of speculation, but likely contributors include Trajan's reinstitution of the Jewish tax that had

433. *Epistle to Hero*, chaps. 2–3.

434. Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 454–457; Jacob Neusner, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia*, vol. 1: *The Parthian Period* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), 13; Neusner, "Babylonia"; Ernest L. Abel, *The Roots of Anti-Semitism* (Rutherford: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1975), 143–145; Dio, *Roman History*, 68.32.1, https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Cassius_Dio/68*.html; Eusebius, *Church History*, 4.2.1–5.

been imposed by the Emperor Vespasian after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple; the seeming inattention of Roman troops fixed on other goals; Trajan's invasion of a Parthian kingdom in which the Jewish population was, as generally believed, given much greater leeway to practice its religion; and the fact that such an invasion would have compromised trading lines from which Jewish merchants greatly profited.[435] Judea and Antioch remained relatively quiet during these uprisings, however, perhaps because of the heavy presence of Roman soldiers preparing for the coming invasion or because of the recent tensions that had led to Ignatius's martyrdom.[436]

Trajan's successor, Hadrian, a former governor of Syria, chose to withdraw from the conquered Parthian land, due no doubt in part because of defeats Trajan's forces suffered after the acquiescent people rebelled as soon as the main portion of Roman troops left the area.[437] However, nearly twenty years after Trajan's invasion, around 135–137 CE, Jerusalem and Judea would again erupt, this time under the influence of the Messianic pretender Simon Bar Kokhba. Here, too, without the aid of a detailed account left to us like that of Josephus's history of the Jewish War of 66–70, details are sketchy.[438] Possible hypotheses for the cause of the uprising include Hadrian's building of or intention to build a new city called Aelia Capitolina on the site of Jerusalem and a temple to Jupiter on the grounds of

435. Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 454–457; Neusner, *History of the Jews*, 13; Neusner, "Babylonia"; Abel, *Roots of Anti-Semitism*, 144; Eusebius, *Church History*, 4.2.5.

436. Thomas A. Robinson, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 139.

437. Dio, *Roman History*, 69.1.2, https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Cassius_Dio/69*.html; George Rawlinson, *Parthia* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1893), 313.

438. Giovanni Battista Bazzana, "The Bar Kokhba Revolt and Hadrian's Religious Policy," in *Hadrian and the Christians*, ed. Marco Rizzi (Germany: De Gruyter, 2010), 75, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110224719; Cohen, *From the Maccabees*, 17.

the old temple, as well as the outlawing of circumcision.[439] Jewish insurgents had laid plans for such a conflict, however, for some time, as corroborated by the extensive creation of tunnels, walls, and weaponry made by the independence fighters; indeed, the second- and third-century Roman historian Cassius Dio notes that "so long, indeed, as Hadrian was close by in Egypt and again in Syria, the [Jewish insurgents] remained quiet, . . . but when he went farther away, they openly revolted."[440] Indeed, the timing may have been influenced by Messianic expectations surrounding the seventy-year anniversary of the destruction of the Temple.[441]

Cassius Dio's claim that during the Judean uprising "the Jews everywhere were showing signs of disturbance, were gathering together, and giving evidence of great hostility to the Romans, partly by secret and partly by overt acts," suggests that Jewish people from other regions were drawn into the conflict, and it is possible that skirmishes extended into parts of Syria and Arabia, even as areas that had seen conflict twenty years earlier remained quiescent.[442] That such fighting extended to Antioch is less certain if not unlikely; indeed, the fact that Bar Kokhba's kingdom appears

439. Dio, *Roman History*, 69.12.1–2; Alessandro Galimberti, "Hadrian, Eleusis, and the Beginning of Christian Apologetics," in Rizzi, *Hadrian and the Christians*, 74; Bazzana, "Bar Kokhba Revolt," 90, 92.

440. Dio, *Roman History*, 69.1.2–3.

441. Cohen, *From the Maccabees*, 34.

442. Anthony Everitt, *Hadrian and the Triumph of Rome* (New York: Random House, 2009), 299; "Bar Kochba," Livius.org, October 10, 2020, https://www.livius.org/articles/concept/roman-jewish-wars/roman-jewish-wars-8/. Documents found in Galilean ruins show that some fighters were from Arabia and suggest that the fighting extended into Galilee, though it's possible the discovery reflects only the presence of refugees. Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 467. Mark A. Chancey disputes the idea that there was much fighting outside Judea. Chancey, *Greco-Roman Culture and the Galilee of Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 65.

to have extended south of Jerusalem and along the western coast of the Dead Sea and may well never have included Jerusalem suggests that larger cities with heavy Roman presence may have been spared despite Bar Kokhba's setting up of a short-lived independent kingdom in Judea.[443] Nonetheless, Jewish people of Antioch interested in supporting Bar Kokhba's nascent independent state would likely have left the city to support the Jewish homeland. Also must be considered the fact that not all Jewish people would necessarily have been dead set against Hadrian's purposes. As the scholar Giovanni Battista Bazzana notes, "Only too narrow a concept of the opposition between Judaism and Hellenism in the Land of Israel at this time allows [one] to maintain the strict image of a complete and total refusal, on Israel's side, of the empire and its institutions."[444] Hadrian's actions may well have "met the favour of a relevant part of the Jewish population," given "the privileges and benefits" Hadrian's rebuilding of Jerusalem would have involved—namely, the greater integration of the city into the larger Roman world, perhaps similar to the manner in which some Hellenized Jewish people approved of the attempt to make Jerusalem a Greek polis during the

443. Everitt, *Hadrian and the Triumph*, 302; "Bar Kochba," Livius.org. The claim that Bar Kokhba never took Jerusalem is based on the fact that no coinage issued by Bar Kokhba's short-lived state has been found there. Everitt, *Hadrian and the Triumph*, 302; "Bar Kochba," Livius.org. However, many still claim Jerusalem was a part of the state. See, for example, Ken Spiro, "The Bar Kochba Revolt," Judaism Online, SimpleToRemember.com, https://www.simpletoremember.com/articles/a/the_bar_kochba_revolt/; Yosef Eisen, "Bar Kokhba Revolt," Chabad.org, https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2713657/jewish/Roman-Rulers.htm; "Bar Kochba," JewishHistory.org, https://www.jewishhistory.org/bar-kochba/; Abel, *Roots of Anti-Semitism*, 146. The fact that "religious ceremonies were restored and a new high priest appointed" would suggest some degree of control, perhaps of the temple. Everitt, *Hadrian and the Triumph*, 300; "Bar Kochba," Livius.org.

444. Bazzana, "Bar Kokhba Revolt," 92.

reign of the Seleucid king Antiochus Epiphanes before the rise of the Maccabees about three hundred years earlier.[445] As such, Hadrian had not been aiming to dislodge the Jewish people from their capital so much as to make Jerusalem into a multicultural and multiethnic center, possibly with a Jewish temple among others, just as he at one point even contemplated "Christian temples" in various cities.[446]

The independence movement run by Bar Kokhba was not kind to Jewish people who were Christian and who thus did not recognize his claim to messiahship. "Barchochebas, the leader of the revolt of the Jews," Justin Martyr would note a couple of decades later, "gave orders that Christians alone should be led to cruel punishments, unless they would deny Jesus Christ and utter blasphemy."[447] No doubt, the controversial support of the Rabbi Aqiba, president of the rabbinical academy at Yavneh, alongside Rabbis Gershom and Aha, for Bar Kokhba's messianic claim did not help relations between Jewish people and Christians.[448] Jewish Christians would have seen little relief after Bar Kokhba's defeat either, as Hadrian then banned Sabbath observance, synagogue meetings, the teaching of the Torah, and the ownership of scrolls for the rest of his reign.[449]

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445. Bazzana, 90–92; quotes on 91 and 92; Cohen, *From the Maccabees*, 72; Philip Neal, *Judaism—Revelation of Moses or Tradition of Men?* (Hollister, Calif.: York Publishing, 2010), 39–41; Everitt, *Hadrian and the Triumph*, 296.

446. Bazzana, "Bar Kokhba Revolt," 90–92; Marco Rizzi, "Hadrian and the Christians," in Rizzi, *Hadrian and the Christians*, 13–14.

447. Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, chap. 31.

448. "Bar Kochba," Livius.org.

449. Everitt, *Hadrian and the Triumph*, 305; "Ancient Jewish History: The Bar-Kokhba Revolt (132–135 CE)," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 2008, Jewish Virtual Library, https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-bar-kokhba-revolt-132-135-ce. Cohen notes, with an uncertainty characteristic of our knowledge of the war, that such steps may have been a cause rather than a consequence of the uprising. Cohen, *From the Maccabees*, 33.

Indeed, once Hadrian reconquered the territory, Jerusalem was leveled and the Jewish people banned from it as well as from much of Judea.[450] The attempt to prevent the Roman enterprise of internationalizing the city per the Roman model, with the Jewish faith just one of many, led instead to the total expulsion of the Jewish people, including Jewish Christians, who may well have fled earlier given Bar Kokhba's antipathy toward them. Antioch, as a city relatively close but also far enough away from the heart of military action to be relatively safe, likely saw an influx of Jewish refugees, including Jewish Christians, similar to the wave of immigrants it had seen in 70 CE at the time of Titus's destruction of the temple.[451] However, the degree, in the near term, to which such refugees would have openly identified as Jewish is less certain. At least in Judea, following the war, "displaying any outward sign of Judaism could be fatal."[452] Many religiously observant Jewish people went underground, as evidenced by a lack of Jewish iconography in public buildings in Judea from the time and by a rabbinic ruling that, because of the intense persecution, outside murder, idolatry, and adultery, the rules of the Torah could be put aside to save one's life.[453] Others probably fled east, into Parthia, bringing with them the Pharisaic strictures that had gained so much popularity in the land from which they were now largely banned and, thus, also the conflict with Jewish Christian believers, possibly contributing to such believers' sublimation to Jewish Pharisaical teaching or to their separation from Jewish synagogues and concomitant acceptance of alternative non-Jewish teachings as part of their Christian faith,

450. Everitt, *Hadrian and the Triumph*, 304–305; Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 470–471; Eusebius, *Church History*, 4.6.3–4.

451. Richard A. Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics, People* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1995), 124.

452. Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 477.

453. Goodman, 477–478.

resulting in the loss of history regarding the early church of the East, as discussed in the next chapter.[454]

Meanwhile, ongoing conflicts with the Jewish people throughout the Roman Empire not only furthered growing anti-Jewish feelings but also led to an accompanying desire among Christians to distance themselves from their Jewish origins and to express their good behavior to the empire's ruler.[455] This is perhaps best expressed in the defenses of the faith written to Hadrian by Quadratus and Aristides, both likely presented between the Jewish uprisings in 117 and 135.[456] The former, Eusebius notes, wrote because "certain wicked men had attempted to trouble the Christians"; indeed, Jerome claims that Quadratus presented his apology soon after Publius, the bishop of Athens, had been put to death by locals.[457] Alas, Quadratus's apology, save one brief quote, does not survive.[458] Aristides's apology, by contrast, has come down to us as a part of several other manuscripts, and although it expends many words comparing the Christian beliefs about the divine sphere to those of the "Barbarians and Greeks," alongside those of the Jews, Aristides's comments with regard to the latter are telling:

> The Jews then say that God is one, the Creator of all, and omnipotent; and that it is not right that any other should be worshipped except this God alone. And herein they appear to approach the truth more than all the nations, especially in that they worship God and not His works. And they imitate God by the philanthropy which prevails among

454. Neusner, *History of the Jews*, 125.
455. Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 178.
456. Galimberti, "Hadrian, Eleusis, and the Beginning," 73.
457. Eusebius, *Church History*, 4.3.1, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250104.htm; Jerome, *On Illustrious Men*, chap. 19.
458. "Quadratus of Athens," Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/quadratus.html.

> them; for they have compassion on the poor, and they release the captives, and bury the dead, and do such things as these, which are acceptable before God and well-pleasing also to men,—which (customs) they have received from their forefathers.
>
> Nevertheless they too erred from true knowledge. And in their imagination they conceive that it is God they serve; whereas by their mode of observance it is to the angels and not to God that their service is rendered:—as when they celebrate sabbaths and the beginning of the months, and feasts of unleavened bread, and a great fast; and fasting and circumcision and the purification of meats, which things, however, they do not observe perfectly.[459]

Aristides, in other words, defends Jewish beliefs regarding the worship of one god and charity, but he distances Christians from various other uniquely Jewish customs, includ-

459. Aristides, *The Apology of Aristides the Philosopher*, trans. D. M. Kay, chaps. 2, 14, Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/aristides-kay.html; background information from introduction to *Apology of Aristides*, Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/aristides.html. In claiming that Jewish observances worship angels, Aristides tied Jewish beliefs to Gnostic ideas that claimed those beliefs originated in a lesser angelic god or conversely to Gnostic beliefs that venerated angels, as indeed such veneration played a role in certain Jewish mystic cults. On the latter, see Paul McKechnie, *Christianizing Asia Minor: Conversion, Communities, and Social Change in the Pre-Constantinian Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 27–28. Some scholars even argue that Gnosticism itself originated in Hellenistically inflected Judaism, but Aristides's argument had another effect common to many Christian writers of the time: ascribing "those aspects of Jewish thought and practice that were most criticized to Jews and appropriat[ing] those aspects that were praised and respected for themselves." Karen L. King, *What Is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 176, 43 (quote).

ing beliefs regarding worship days and food. Throughout the letter, Aristides emphasizes Christian piety, contrasting it most especially with the behavior of the Greeks, but it is Aristides's account of Christian behavior toward the Greeks that is the most revealing: "Though they [Christians] know the error of these (the Greeks), and are persecuted by them, they bear and endure it; and for the most part they have compassion on them, as men who are destitute of knowledge."[460] In other words, Christians are harmless—nonviolent—toward those who do not share their point of view; the implication is that they are not like those of the Jewish faith.

As tensions eased, the flight of Jewish people to areas like Syria (and further east to Parthia) meant that many more with Jewish Pharisaical customs would enter the local synagogues, even if most Jewish leadership—indeed, the greatest number of Jewish refugees in general—likely settled in Galilee, forging what would become the headquarters of rabbinical power.[461] Such would have furthered in the later second century the processes of Jewish and Christian alienation that are well documented in Matthew, the *Didache*, and Ignatius's letters as already occurring in the late first and early second centuries. Conversely, the exit of Jewish people from Judea would have also meant stronger ties to Christians holding various Jewish customs.[462] In other words, the exodus meant that Antioch would become not only the first place where Christianity first took hold among non-Jewish people but also one of the last places in the Roman Empire where Jewish-flavored Christianity continued to hold sway. Its location near the eastern edge of the Roman Empire placed it in a unique

460. *Apology of Aristides the Philosopher*, chap. 17.

461. Horsley, *Galilee*, 124; Mark A. Chancey, *The Myth of a Gentile Galilee* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 60–61; Neusner, *History of the Jews*, 113, 120, 135–136; Neusner, "Babylonia."

462. Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 300.

position. If Parthian Christians felt pushed to leave Jewish fellowship by the homogenization of the Jewish faith and Roman Christians felt pushed to leave Jewish fellowship because of the spread of anti-Judaic feelings, Antioch experienced the sway from both sides, resulting in a blend of the two cultural impetuses, one continuing with many Jewish traditions outside the Jewish setting, and one suppressing Jewish traditions within a non-Jewish setting.

Information about the Christian church in Antioch from this time until that of Theophilus late in the century, however, is sketchy. Eusebius provides us with a list of names of bishops: Cornelius, who succeeded Hero, and Eros, who preceded Theophilus.[463] Glanville Downey hypothesizes that "the popularity of [Gnostic] teaching, which would have drawn some people away from orthodox Christianity, may in part be responsible for the circumstance that our sources have little to say about the church at Antioch during the first three quarters of the second century."[464] What is evident is that the church as a whole during this time was changing significantly. Justin Martyr, who found his following in Rome, would espouse a view that of the Jewish people who

> choose to live with the Christians and the faithful . . . not inducing them either to be circumcised like themselves, or to keep the Sabbath, or to observe any other such ceremonies, . . . [Christians] ought to join [them]selves to such, and associate with them in all things as kinsmen and brethren. But if, [. . . though they . . .] say they believe in this Christ, [they] compel those Gentiles who believe in this Christ to live in all respects according to the law given by Moses, or choose not to associate so

463. Eusebius, *Church History*, 4.20.1.
464. Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 300.

> intimately with them, I in like manner do not approve of them.[465]

Jerusalem, once a center to which churches could look for what constituted Christian orthodoxy, now held only non-Jewish believers.[466]

Meanwhile, alternative Christianities, which the apostles—as well as later writers, such as Ignatius—had worked hard to counter, appear to have thrived. Already, teachers such as Menander and Saturninus had made their presence in Antioch felt, but the later second century would bring further alternative teachers to the city. Among them would have been Tatian, a one-time student of Justin Martyr, and Marcion, both of whom would also find followings further east, as discussed in the next chapter. Tatian, in fact, is thought to have started, around the time of the bishop Theophilus, a school in Antioch, where he spread his supposedly docetic, ascetic, and dualistic ideas, though what few writings we have of his suggest that his Gnostic views emerged only later in his life, after the composition of his surviving writings, or that the accusations regarding his heretical bent are misinterpretations or exaggerations; in other words, it's possible that his departure from Rome was because Antioch and the East proved a more hospitable place for views that were falling out of favor farther west rather than because Tatian had taken on a Gnostic ideology, complete with a pantheon of lesser gods or angel-like aeons separating the true God from man.[467] The fact that both Theophilus and Tatian apparently created Gospel harmonies (neither of which have come down

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465. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, chap. 47.

466. Eusebius, *Church History*, 4.6.4.

467. Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 302; Emily J. Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century: The Case of Tatian* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 177.

to us in whole), however, suggests that their views may have been sufficiently divergent so as to require different works.[468]

Marcion's church, founded likely two or three decades before Tatian's school, espoused its own dualistic, docetic, and ascetic views, though free of the Gnostic cosmology that Tatian is accused of professing.[469] Marcion's views, in turn, had likely been influenced by another Antiochene, Cerdo, who is noted as having traveled to Rome around 140 CE.[470] Cerdo, himself apparently under the influence of Simon the Magician and possibly Saturninus, taught that there were in fact two gods, according to Irenaeus, one "righteous" (or just), the other "benevolent" (or merciful); from the latter, previously unknown one came Jesus, while the first was the god of the Jews.[471] Quite possibly, Cerdo, after exposure to Simon's teaching, had come to his view from such scriptural passages as Matthew 11:27 ("neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him") and John 17:26 ("O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee"). More explicitly, Hippolytus of Rome and Epiphanius of Salamis, in the third and fourth centuries respectively, claim that

468. Theophilus's harmony is attested to by Jerome in his letter "Ad Algasiam." Francis Josephe Bacchus, "Theophilus," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 14 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912), http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14625a.htm.

469. Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 291; Marian Hillar, *From Logos to Trinity: The Evolution of Religious Beliefs from Pythagoras to Tertullian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 180–181; Alan Knight, *Primitive Christianity in Crisis* (Antioch, Calif.: A.R.K. Research, 2003), 51.

470. Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 291; G. Salmon, "Cerdo, Gnostic Teacher," in Wace and Piercy, *Dictionary of Early Christian Biography*, https://www.ccel.org/ccel/wace/biodict.html?term=Cerdo,%20Gnostic%20teacher.

471. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1.27.1. See also Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 1.41.1.1.

Cerdo's student, Marcion, used Luke 5:37–38 regarding new wine in old wine skins and Luke 6:43 regarding good trees bearing only good fruit to distinguish two radically different gods.[472] For a time, Cerdo met among other Christians, spreading this idea secretly, then openly, before finally being forced from among them.[473] Marcion developed Cerdo's concept further, coming to see the Jewish god not as righteous but as evil, adding a third god (of matter) in the form of Satan, and then creating his own version of Christianity, complete with his own canon, church (the Church of Jesus Christ), and set of doctrines.[474] Because Cerdo left no written records, later early Christian historians, such as Hippolytus and Epiphanius, would in most respects run the two men's teachings together, such that Marcion's became a copy and popularization of what Cerdo had taught among the Antiochene Christians and later the Romans.[475] The popularity of such teachers at Antioch, however, be-

472. Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*, 10.15, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/hippolytus10.html; Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 1.42.2.1.

473. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.4.3; Salmon, "Cerdo, Gnostic Teacher."

474. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1.27.2; Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*, 10.15; Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 1.42.1.2, 1.42.2.8, 42.3.2; Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, 107–108; Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 291; Adolf von Harnack, *Marcion: The Gospel of the Alien God*, trans. John E. Steely and Lyle D. Bierma (Durham, N.C.: Labyrinth Press, 1990), 19; Knight, *Primitive Christianity in Crisis*, 49.

475. Salmon, "Cerdo, Gnostic Teacher." Indeed, Epiphanius claims that Marcion joined Cerdo's sect, which taught of an evil and a good god, then later formed his own with the addition of Satan as the third god. Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 1.41.1.8, 1.42.2.8, 1.42.3.1–2. Meanwhile, Hippolytus claims that both men taught the three gods, though he acknowledges that some disciples viewed the "just" god as simply that—not evil. Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*, 10.15. The third-century pseudo-Tertullian, in chapter 6 of *Against All Heresies*, goes so far as to adopt for Cerdo nearly all the teachings for which Marcion is known. Tertullian, *Against All Heresies*, trans. S. Thelwall, Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/tertullian19.html.

lies the degree to which Antioch's influence in doctrinal matters, both orthodox and non-, permeated regions to the west and east, north and south, lending to the emergence of multiple fellowships and competing tenets, especially once the centralizing force of the Jerusalem apostles and their descendants was neutralized and adherents felt a need to hide their Jewish-flavored customs or to conform to increasingly accepted separatist Jewish strictures to avoid persecution from non-Jews or Jews.

Hadrian's peace with Parthia, following his retreat to the western side of the Euphrates, would come to an end about fifty years later, during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, who again would venture into Parthian territory using Trajan's northern route through Armenia.[476] The war was occasioned by the Parthian king Vologases III's invasion of Syria and Palestine, which required then that Rome send forces to Antioch to rebuff the incursion.[477] The result was that Rome took control of western Mesopotamia.[478] Although territory once held by Parthia would now fall within the bounds of the Roman Empire, the eastern edge of the empire, of which Antioch was part, would pose frequent problems over the succeeding years. About ten years after Parthia's invasion, one of the Roman commanders from that war, Cassius, who was from Syria, would attempt to set himself up as emperor, with the result that Antioch, which supported the unsuccessful rebellion, for a time would lose its prestige, including its ability to hold games and public meetings.[479] About eighteen years after

476. Michael Thomas, "The Conversions of Adiabene and Edessa in Syriac Christianity and Judaism: The Relations of Jews and Christians in Northern Mesopotamia in Antiquity," *Concordia Theological Journal* 7, no. 1 (Winter 2020): 22–23.

477. Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 226; Rawlinson, *Parthia*, 322–324.

478. Rawlinson, *Parthia*, 325–327.

479. Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 227–228.

Cassius's rebellion, Antioch would choose to support the wrong claimant to the throne during the year of the five emperors (193 CE), such that it would lose its position for a time as the capital of the province of Syria.[480] Nevertheless, it would still serve as the center for the military operations that followed.[481] In the confusion regarding Rome's central government, western Mesopotamia would attempt to free itself from the empire's grip.[482] No sooner did the emperor who eventually took the throne, Severus, succeed in retaking the rebellious territory then the Parthian king Vologases IV, sensing opportunity, came to the rescue of the conquered inhabitants, once again pushing his forces as far west as northern Syria.[483] As with his predecessor's invasion some thirty-five years earlier, however, Vologases IV would fail to hold the territory.[484]

Such conflict along the Roman-Parthian border likely did not lend itself to easy living among Jewish and Christian adherents within Antioch. Local Roman governments continued sporadically to be a bane to those who wished not to practice the accepted Greco-Roman religions. The *Historia Augusta* mentions a rebellion of the Jews under Hadrian's successor Antoninus Pius.[485] The Roman commander and governor of Syria Cassius is noted to have had Jewish support in his attempt to wrest control of the empire from Marcus Aurelius.[486] At least one scholar has pro-

480. Downey, 238–241.
481. Downey, 242.
482. Rawlinson, *Parthia*, 333–335.
483. Rawlinson, 335–336
484. Rawlinson, 336–339.
485. *Historia Augusta*, "The Life of Antoninus Pius," by Julius Capitolinus, trans. David Magie, 5.4, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 1 (1921), https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Historia_Augusta/Antoninus_Pius*.html; Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 475.
486. "Marcus Aurelius Antoninus," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 2008, Jewish Virtual Library, https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/marcus-aurelius-antoninus-x00b0.

posed that some Christians also supported Cassius in his plot, based on the fact that Tertullian goes out of his way to deny that Christians had a role in the rebellion; that martyrdom was valorized among some Christian sects; and that five Christian apologies (including that of Theophilus of Antioch) were written near this time, each emphasizing Christian loyalty to the Roman emperor.[487] More likely, given the similar practices among the two groups and the wording of Tertullian's defense, the Christians were simply confused with Jewish rebels, but such would not have lent to good relations between the parties nevertheless. Similarly, some sources point to a Jewish and Samaritan war in Syria occurring at the time that the emperor Severus retook western Mesopotamia, a victory for which the Roman senate granted the emperor a special celebration.[488] In turn, around 202 CE, some five years after the conflict, Severus prohibited conversion to Judaism or Christianity, leading apparently to persecution of Christians particularly in Africa and Syria.[489] In other words, Hadrian's de-

487. Livia Capponi, "Serapis, Boukoloi, and Christians from Hadrian to Marcus Aurelius," in Rizzi, *Hadrian and the Christians*, 133–134. The passage in Tertullian's work reads, "Treason is falsely laid to our charge, though no one has ever been able to find followers of Albinus, or Niger, or Cassius, among Christians." Tertullian, "To Scapula," trans. S. Thelwall, chap. 2, from *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, N.Y.: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0305.htm. The most pertinent passage in Theophilus is in *To Autolycus*, 1.11. The other three apologists were Melito, bishop of Sardis; Athenagoras; and Apollinaris.

488. Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 475; Richard Gottheil and Samuel Krauss, "Severus, Lucius Septimius," *Jewish Encyclopedia*, https://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/13456-severus-lucius-septimius.

489. Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 475; Gottheil and Krauss, "Severus, Lucius Septimius"; Karl Hoeber, "Septimius Severus," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 13 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912), http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13721a.htm.

struction of Jerusalem and banning of Jewish people from their homeland did not result in an ongoing peaceful coexistence with them in other locations in the empire. Christians whose faith was well known to have originated from within Jewish culture felt a similar sting, especially if they continued to maintain what were seen as Jewish customs. Indeed, the banning of conversion to Judaism or Christianity may have been largely aimed not so much at Jewish people but at "'Judaizers'—non-Jews observing Jewish practices."[490] Christians' unwillingness to sacrifice to the gods on behalf of the empire's health no doubt did not help and, in some cases, such as after the earthquake in 115–117 already discussed or after a fire in Antioch sometime during the reign of Antoninus Pius (138–161) leveled much of the city, may have led to anti-Christian pogroms.[491]

That said, the extent to which such persecution was empire wide is possibly overstated by some later early Christian writers, whose intent was to promote the religion by emphasizing the troubles that early Christians had endured. Modern historians call many of these accounts into question.[492] And some writings from Roman rulers of

490. Abel, *Roots of Anti-Semitism*, 141.

491. *Historia Augusta*, "The Life of Antoninus Pius," 9.2; Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 224.

492. See, for example, Donald Robertson, "Did Marcus Aurelius Persecute the Christians?," Donald Robertson's blog, January 13, 2017, https://donaldrobertson.name/2017/01/13/did-marcus-aurelius-persecute-the-christians/. For a contrasting view, see Patrick Healy, "Marcus Aurelius Antoninus," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 2 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907), http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02109a.htm. For rebuttal about the accusations leveled at the accuracy of Eusebius's history, see Roger Pearse, "Eusebius the Liar?," The Tertullian Project, https://www.tertullian.org/rpearse/eusebius/eusebius_the_liar.htm. Stambaugh and Balch note that "in general during the second century . . . authorities in Rome seem to have paid little attention to the Christians." *New Testament*, 165. Goodman notes that "most attacks on Christians were . . . locally inspired, and large-scale persecution of Christians by the Roman state was rare." *Rome*

the time seem to confirm a generally hands-off approach when it came to Christians. In a letter either from Marcus Aurelius or Antoninus Pius (or from the former writing on behalf of the latter), for example, the emperor declares:

> In regard to these persons [Christians], many of the governors of the provinces wrote also to our most divine father, to whom he wrote in reply that they should not trouble these people unless it should appear that they were attempting something affecting the Roman government. And to me also many have sent communications concerning these men, but I have replied to them in the same way that my father did. But if any one still persists in bringing accusations against any of these people as such, the person who is accused shall be acquitted of the charge, even if it appear that he is one of them, but the accuser shall be punished.[493]

Many scholars now view the letter as spurious, often depending on the degree to which they agree with the assessment that the Roman government was actively anti-Christian or mostly apathetic.[494] Nevertheless, the passage, reminiscent of, though even more lax than, Trajan's letter to Pliny the Younger some years earlier regarding how to deal with those accused of being Christians, demonstrates several things: some local people used the accusation of adherence to the Christian faith to attempt to smear others or to cast blame for regional troubles; some local

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and Jerusalem, 509. Only beginning with the emperor Decian, around 250 CE, do we have evidence of empire-wide oppression. Goodman, 510.

493. Quoted in Eusebius, *Church History*, 4.13.6–7.

494. For a full-fledged discussion of the views on the authenticity of the passage, see Kimberly Fowler, "Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History* IV.13.1–8," Judaism and Rome, February 26, 2017, https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/eusebius-caesarea-ecclesiastical-history-iv131–8.

governors questioned the degree to which they should respond and perhaps a few took action for the sake of keeping peace; the central Roman government's main concern was stability and adherence to the government itself; and finally the central government, in some cases, may have actually protected Christians. Such an approach likely extended to some degree also to those who professed the Jewish faith, as evidenced by the fact that Severus, even while outlawing conversion to the Jewish religion, allowed Jewish people to serve in governmental capacities.[495]

Theophilus of Antioch

It is within this milieu, sometime between 169 and 188 CE, that Theophilus of Antioch wrote his one surviving work, *To Autolycus*, a defense of his faith composed in three parts to a thinker who, while boasting of his own gods, had in some manner attacked Theophilus as "a Christian," an attack Theophilus did not take as an insult.[496] What little we know of Theophilus, credited by Eusebius as the sixth bishop of Antioch, was that he was a Syrian by birth who

495. Gottheil and Krauss, "Severus, Lucius Septimius." Goodman sees the paucity of contemporary sources' confirmation, including archeological, epigraphic, and literary, of such ongoing turmoil and rebelliousness among the Jewish people as indicative that such accounts, written about two hundred years later, better suggest that "Jews retained their reputation as rebels and as a disruptive elements in the empire" than of actual events. Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 475–476.

496. Theophilus of Antioch, *To Autolycus*, trans. Marcus Dods, 1.1, from *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, N.Y.: Christian Literature Publishing, 1885), revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/02041.htm; Rick Rogers, *Theophilus of Antioch: The Life and Thought of a Second-Century Bishop* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2000), 7.

converted to Christianity as an adult.[497] Eusebius and Jerome both credit him with several other works that have not survived, including *Against Marcion*, *Against the Heresy of Hermogenes*, and possible commentaries on the Gospels and Proverbs.[498]

The three books that forge *To Autolycus* have a rather haphazard quality to them in terms of subject matter and organization, though Rick Rogers, who has written extensively on the work, believes the books progress in the manner by which Theophilus addresses Autolycus—first as his nemesis, then as a skeptic, and finally as a potential convert.[499] Mirroring that development, the first book focuses on the qualities of the Christian God versus those of the Greek and Roman gods, while book 2 compares philosophers' opinions on the gods, history, and creation with the biblical account of the creation and humankind's early history. Book 3, finally, compares moral precepts of the philosophers with those of Christians and defends the antiquity of Christianity.[500] Interestingly, Theophilus's text quotes heavily from the Old Testament but comparatively less from the New; furthermore, what few references are made to Jesus Christ (neither name is in itself ever invoked) are primarily to his identity as the Word or to his followers as "Christians." Several scholars have commented on how the work appears to be almost Jewish in feel. "[Theophilus's] thought owes so much to Judaism," writes Glanville Downey, ". . . that he seems himself to be more Jewish than Christian."[501] Rick Rogers believes simi-

497. Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 328; Eusebius, *Church History*, 4.1.20; Wallace-Hadrill, *Christian Antioch*, 43.

498. Eusebius, *Church History*, 4.24.1, 4.24.3; Jerome, *On Illustrious Men*, chap. 25.

499. Rogers, *Theophilus of Antioch*, 25.

500. A summary is provided in Rogers, *Theophilus of Antioch*, 19–20.

501. Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 301.

larly that "Theophilus' thought appears to reflect a Jewish-Christian background."[502] Robert M. Grant makes comparable claims.[503]

One of the ways in which the work has a Jewish flavor is in its emphasis on the law. Indeed, Theophilus's discourse focuses very little on the importance of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and God's corresponding forgiveness. Rather, he stresses humankind's need for obedience:

> God made man free, and with power over himself. That, then, which man brought upon himself through carelessness and disobedience, this God now vouchsafes to him as a gift through His own philanthropy and pity, when men obey Him. For as man, disobeying, drew death upon himself; so, obeying the will of God, he who desires is able to procure for himself life everlasting. For God has given us a law and holy commandments; and every one who keeps these can be saved, and, obtaining the resurrection, can inherit incorruption.[504]

The alternative is that if a person "turn to the things of death, disobeying God, he should himself be the cause of death to himself."[505] As such, Theophilus claims, humankind was made "by nature neither mortal nor immortal," capable in other words, "of both."[506]

Another Jewish teaching that receives emphasis is the resurrection, a doctrine Theophilus returns to repeatedly throughout the first two books of his discourse as part and parcel of the judgment that God would render on the earth and a belief Autolycus apparently held in little esteem.

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502. Rogers, *Theophilus of Antioch*, 3.
503. Rogers, 159–160; Wallace-Hadrill, *Christian Antioch*, 43.
504. Theophilus, *To Autolycus*, 2.27, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/02042.htm.
505. Theophilus, 2.27.
506. Theophilus, 2.27.

"Show me even one who has been raised from the dead, that seeing I may believe," Autolycus had apparently stated in a salvo preceding Theophilus's first tract.[507] Theophilus responded on three fronts, indicative of the manner in which he responds to many of the arguments against his faith. In one, he draws on similar stories in the mythologies in which Autolycus professes belief—the manner in which "Hercules, who burned himself, lives; and that Aesculapius, who was struck with lightning, was raised."[508] In other words, Theophilus looks at the teachings of the philosophers and the religions around him, finding parallels with ideas represented in his scriptures and documenting shortcomings in the nonbiblical works. In another front, he appeals to the creation, to the manner in which seeds germinate and the sun and moon disappear and rise again, such that God is able to "manifest even by these things, that God is able to effect the general resurrection of all men."[509] On this front, Theophilus addresses scientific and historical facts, attempting to show how Autolycus's sources lack the real-world evidence Theophilus can point to as backing scripture. And on yet another front, Theophilus turns to didactic elements of his own faith: "When the resurrection shall take place, then you will believe, whether you want to or not; and your faith shall be reckoned for unbelief, unless you believe now."[510]

The emphasis on Jewish teachings and writings may seem out of synch with other trends in the Roman Empire and in the Christian community itself at the time, wherein anti-Jewishness seemed to have a constantly increasing effect, but it makes sense within the specific milieu in which Theophilus was writing. Autolycus's main arguments

507. Theophilus, 1.13.
508. Theophilus, 1.13.
509. Theophilus, 1.13.
510. Theophilus, 1.8.

against Christianity seem to have been based around its youth as a religion and its seeming immorality. You "are still of opinion that the word of truth is an idle tale, and suppose that our writings are recent and modern," Theophilus notes to Autolycus at the start of his third book.[511] Similarly, he also notes that Autolycus "give[s] credit to the prevalent rumor wherewith godless lips falsely accuse us, who are worshippers of God, and are called Christians, alleging that the wives of us all are held in common and made promiscuous use of; and that we even commit incest with our own sisters, and, what is most impious and barbarous of all, that we eat human flesh."[512] As with his arguments regarding the resurrection, Theophilus contests many of the assertions by pointing to instances of such immoralities among the gods in mythology and in the opinions of philosophers (for example, Plato's recommendation in *The Republic* that "the wives of all be common, using the precedent of the son of Jupiter and the lawgiver of the Cretans").[513] But the heart of Theophilus's argument comes by tying Christianity to its origin in the Jewish faith.

Biblical—that is, Jewish—law, Theophilus notes, precludes Christians engaging in such behavior. He goes on to recite eight of the ten commandments (absent, in book 3, are the injunctions on taking God's name in vain and the Sabbath) and notes further obligations among Christians from the New Testament, the Prophets, and Proverbs to avoid not only adulterous and murderous acts but even the thought of them.[514] "Consider, therefore," Theophilus

511. Theophilus, *To Autolycus*, 3.1, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/02043.htm.

512. Theophilus, 3.4.

513. Theophilus, 3.6.

514. Theophilus, 3.9, 13–14. The absence of the third and fourth commandments is likely because Theophilus viewed Jewish understanding about God and the Sabbath as being incorrect. Robert M. Grant, *Gods and the One God*, 131.

notes, "whether those who teach such things can possibly live indifferently, and be commingled in unlawful intercourse, or, most impious of all, eat human flesh, especially when we are forbidden so much as to witness shows of gladiators, lest we become partakers and abettors of murders."[515]

Theophilus's discourse on the accuracy of the predictions of the Jewish prophets furthers this cause. To accomplish his purpose, Theophilus alternately paraphrases and recites large chunks of the book of Genesis, recounting the creation and the genealogies of humankind from that time to his present so that Autolycus "can see how our sacred writings are shown to be more ancient and true than those of the Greeks and Egyptians, or any other historians. For Herodotus and Thucydides, as also Xenophon, and most other historians, began their relations from about the reign of Cyrus and Darius, not being able to speak with accuracy of prior and ancient times."[516] Creation plays a key role in this insofar as, Theophilus notes, "all poets and authors who have written [have done so] in uncertainty. For some, maintaining that the world was uncreated, went into infinity; and others, asserting that it was created, said that already 153,075 years had passed."[517] By contrast, Jewish prophets "uttered both what regarded the creation of the world and all other things. For they predicted also pestilences, and famines, and wars . . . and they all have spoken things consistent and harmonious with each other, both what happened before them and what happened in their own time, and what things are now being fulfilled in our own day: wherefore we are persuaded also concerning the

515. Theophilus, *To Autolycus*, 3.15.
516. Theophilus, 3.26.
517. Theophilus, 3.16.

future things that they will fall out, as also the first have been accomplished."[518]

It is in this context that Jesus, as the Word, makes his most prominent appearance in Theophilus's work, as the means by which the creation took place and the prophets given an understanding of the work:

> [God] wanting nothing, and existing before the ages, willed to make man by whom He might be known; for him, therefore, He prepared the world. . . . God, then, having His own Word internal within His own bowels, begot Him, emitting Him along with His own wisdom before all things. He had this Word as a helper in the things that were created by Him, and by Him He made all things. He is called "governing principle," because He rules, and is Lord of all things fashioned by Him. He, then, being Spirit of God, and governing principle, and wisdom, and power of the highest, came down upon the prophets, and through them spoke of the creation of the world and of all other things. For the prophets were not when the world came into existence, but the wisdom of God which was in Him, and His holy Word which was always present with Him. . . . For the divine wisdom foreknew that some would trifle and name a multitude of gods that do not exist. In order, therefore, that the living God might be known by His works, and that [it might be known that] by His Word God created the heavens and the earth, and all that is therein, he said, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."[519]

518. Theophilus, 2.9.
519. Theophilus, 2.10.

As Robert M. Grant notes, Theophilus's "language is rather loose. Sometimes he treats Logos [the Word] as different from Wisdom; sometimes he identifies them."[520] Such lack of precision allows for multiple readings or misreadings. (Indeed, Theophilus's mere use of the term "trinity," for God, his Word, and his wisdom, in his second book often accords him as the first to articulate the trinitarian view of God, but as D. S. Wallace-Hadrill notes, it "is hard to regard Theophilus as a trinitarian at all. His God is rather a Unity with ill-defined offshoots or personified qualities.")[521] What does seem clear here, however, is that Theophilus thought of the Word as emanating from within the Father, which is the means by which he may have argued there is only one God.[522] Such a view could place him in some sense perilously close to Gnostic and docetic teachings when it came to the incarnation of Jesus as born in the flesh, depending on how one reads such passages as the following:[523]

> His Word, through whom He made all things, being His power and His wisdom, assuming the person of the Father and Lord of all, went to the garden in the person of God, and conversed with Adam.

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520. Robert M. Grant, *Gods and the One God*, 129.

521. Theophilus, *To Autolycus*, 2.15; Wallace-Hadrill, *Christian Antioch*, 69. For examples of writers noting Theophilus as the first to present the trinity, see Tim Shaw, "Arian Christianity," Daily Medieval, August 30, 2012, http://dailymedieval.blogspot.com/2012/08/arian-christianity.html; Edmund J. Fortman, *The Triune God: A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1972), 50; Rogers, *Theophilus of Antioch*, 75, 302.

522. Robert M. Grant, *Gods and the One God*, 129. "We also confess that God exists, but that He is one, the creator, and maker, and fashioner of this universe; and we know that all things are arranged by His providence, but by Him alone." Theophilus, *To Autolycus*, 3.9. How, we are left to wonder, are we to read Theophilus when he states, "At first God was alone, and the Word in Him"? Theophilus, *To Autolycus*, 2.22. Is he saying God became unalone once bringing forth the Word or that he became unalone once creating the universe via the Word?

523. Robert M. Grant, *Gods and the One God*, 129, 131.

> For the divine writing itself teaches us that Adam said that he had heard the voice. But what else is this voice but the Word of God, who is also His Son? Not as the poets and writers of myths talk of the sons of gods begotten from intercourse [with women], but as truth expounds, the Word, that always exists, residing within the heart of God. For before anything came into being He had Him as a counsellor, being His own mind and thought. But when God wished to make all that He determined on, He begot this Word, uttered, the first-born of all creation, not Himself being emptied of the Word [Reason], but having begotten Reason, and always conversing with His Reason. . . . The Word, then, being God, and being naturally produced from God, whenever the Father of the universe wills, He sends Him to any place; and He, coming, is both heard and seen, being sent by Him, and is found in a place.[524]

In some ways, Theophilus's heavy emphasis on law keeping may make it seem as if Jesus's role was to serve "primarily as an exemplary second Adam" and that the "essence of religion must be revelation in law, not redemption."[525] Nevertheless, as Rick Rogers notes, Theophilus likely still believed in the redemptive action made possible Jesus's death and resurrection: "Given that Theophilus is a bishop in the Christian church, given that he follows in a line of bishops which includes the incarnational Christology and person-based soteriology of Ignatius, and given there is no evidence that the later orthodox Christian community saw him as a heretic or purveyor of 'unorthodox' ideas, it seems logical to conclude that he promoted a Christianity which resembled the Epistle of James in terms of its

524. Theophilus, *To Autolycus*, 2.22.
525. Robert M. Grant, *Gods and the One God*, 132.

teaching on the importance of good works and respect for moral law."[526] That teaching, Rogers notes, claims that the law "has great sanctifying value, but it is not the source of salvation."[527]

The main audience of *To Autolycus*, we must remember, was not, after all, other Christians but rather a critic of them. As such, Theophilus's main arguments were not focused on the person of Christ but rather on the efficacy of the religion that had taken on Jesus's identity. As such, Theophilus's appeal to the ancientness of Christian belief via its tie to Jewish scripture was not unusual among other defenders of the Christian faith in the second century. Indeed, it fits well even with Jewish discourse in the years after Hellenistic culture came to the fore, wherein Jewish thinkers attempted to prove that Jewish ideas antedated Greek ones and, further, helped bring them into being. The third- and second-century BCE Jewish historian Artapanus, for example, would identify Moses with the Greek prophet Orpheus, while around the same time Aristobulus of Paneas would claim that Homer had drawn his materials from Mosaic writings.[528] First-century CE Jewish writers made similar claims. Philo would, like Aristobolus, see Greek philosophy as developing from Moses's own, while Josephus would assert that the Greek philosopher Pythagoras "did not only know [Jewish] doctrines, but was in very great measure a follower and admirer of them" to the extent that "he took a great many of the laws of the Jews into his own philosophy."[529]

Christians, likewise, would often claim ancient origins for their beliefs by emphasizing the connection with the Jewish scriptures, even as they would criticize the Jew-

526. Rogers, *Theophilus of Antioch*, 177.
527. Rogers, 177.
528. Hillar, *From Logos to Trinity*, 41.
529. Hillar, 41; Josephus, *Against Apion*, 1.22.

ish people for not understanding them. Athenagoras of Athens, for example, in his defense of Christianity to the emperors Marcus Aurelius Antoninus and Lucius Aurelius Commodus would appeal, beyond the Greek philosophers, to Old Testament scriptures when defending his view that believing in only one God neither made one an atheist nor that unusual: "The voices of the prophets confirm our arguments—for I think that you also, with your great zeal for knowledge, and your great attainments in learning, cannot be ignorant of the writings either of Moses or of Isaiah and Jeremiah, and the other prophets."[530] Similarly, Melito of Sardis would note in his own defense of Christianity addressed to Marcus Aurelius, "For the philosophy current with us flourished in the first instance among barbarians [that is, the Jewish people]; and, when it afterwards sprang up among the nations under thy rule, during the distinguished reign of thy ancestor Augustus, it proved to be a blessing of most happy omen to thy empire."[531] Justin Martyr, in his *First Apology*, put the Jewish writings to particularly heavy use. In it, he attempted to convince readers that "the prophets who preceded [Jesus Christ], are alone true, and are older than all the writers who have existed."[532] Insofar as that is the case, Christians believed not in magic but in prophecies that had come to pass:

530. Athenagoras of Athens, *A Plea for the Christians by Athenagoras the Athenian: Philosopher and Christian*, trans. B. P. Pratten, chap. 9, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translation of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/athenagoras.html.

531. Melito of Sardis, "From the Apology Addressed to Marcus Aurelius Antoninus," *Fragments of Melito of Sardis*, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/melito.html.

532. Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, chap. 23.

> For with what reason should we believe of a crucified man that He is the first-born of the unbegotten God . . . unless we had found testimonies concerning Him published before He came and was born as man, and unless we saw that things had happened accordingly—the devastation of the land of the Jews, and men of every race persuaded by His teaching through the apostles, and rejecting their old habits . . . but the Jews and Samaritans, having the word of God delivered to them by the prophets, and always expecting the Christ, did not recognise Him when He came, except some few.[533]

Clement of Alexandria, writing a few years after Theophilus, would, like his Jewish counterparts a century or more earlier, claim that Greek philosophy was not only younger than the writings of the Jewish people but derived in part from them. Quoting Eupolemus, Clement would note that "Moses was the first wise man, and the first that imparted grammar to the Jews, that the Phoenicians received it from the Jews, and the Greeks from the Phoenicians."[534] "What is Plato, but Moses speaking in Attic Greek?" he would state elsewhere, quoting Numenius.[535] Such appeals to the antiquity of Christian beliefs, via their tie to ancient Jewish writings, fit well with Roman prejudice toward ancient philosophies and religions.[536]

Theophilus's arguments to Autolycus may have had an important side audience as well. By using primarily Old Testament scriptures and pointing to God's spirit and the Word as the means by which the prophets came to understanding, Theophilus was, in another sense, critiquing the

533. Justin Martyr, chap. 53.
534. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 1.23.
535. Clement of Alexandria, 1.22.
536. Magnus Zetterholm, *Formation of Christianity in Antioch*, 219–220.

teachings of Marcion and various Gnostic thinkers.[537] One tenet of Marcion's was the complete disavowal of the Jewish scriptures, indeed, of any scriptures that spoke primarily to the Jewish people or offered anything positive to say about them or their god. Marcion's god was a different one, the "true" god who had come to free humanity from its flawed and angry creator. Theophilus's extensive use of the Old Testament scriptures, then, was an assault on Marcion's teaching. Without those scriptures, written by the prophets, Theophilus notes, they could not have "foretold all things," including the coming of the Word as the Son, and if there is no fulfilled prophecy, then there is no Spirit of God, nor is there the Word of God by whom God spoke "as by an instrument" to the prophets, nor is there a law "sent [to the] holy prophets to declare and teach the race of men, that each one of us might awake and understand that there is one God."[538]

In a similar vein, Theophilus's extensive allegory regarding the creation can be read as a rebuttal to the various Gnostic sects that preached about the pleroma, the hierarchy of divine beings or aeons that inhabit the heavens and that separate man from the one and ultimate God. Such teaching was rooted in ancient ideas about the universe—namely that all heaven rotated around the earth. As such, the seemingly erratic orbits of the seven planets became associated with chaos, while the stars beyond them came to represent harmony and order.[539] Greek thinkers such as Pythagoras, Orpheus, and Plato, and by extension Gnostic believers, came to see such increasing chaos the closer one came to Earth as emblematic of the descent of the human person's soul from the heavens—that is, from

537. Meeks and Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch*, 21.
538. Theophilus, *To Autolycus*, 2,33, 2.10, 2.34.
539. Knight, *Primitive Christianity in Crisis*, 8–9

the unchanging spiritual Oneness to physical corruption and constant turmoil.[540]

In some ways, the reasoning of a Gnostic thinker like Valentinus could seem very much like that of a Christian such as Theophilus. At the start of the Valentinian tract *Gospel of Truth*, for example, the writer would claim that the gospel is "joy to those who have received from the Father of truth the gift of knowing him by the power of the Logos . . . who is in the thought and the mind of the Father; he it is who is called 'the Savior,' since that is the name of the work which he must do for the redemption of those who have not known the Father."[541] But within that short quote, in the place where I have inserted ellipses, one odd difference is evident: the Logos is said to have "come from the Pleroma."[542] Aeons had also ultimately come from the Father, but as the writer notes, "even if the Aeon had received their perfection, they would not have been able to approach the perfection of the Father, because he retained their perfection in himself, giving it to them as a way to return to him and as a knowledge unique in perfection. . . . As one of whom some have no knowledge, he desires that they know him and that they love him. For what is it that the All lacked, if not the knowledge of the Father?"[543] Humankind, as an offshoot of one of these aeons, had no communication with or knowledge of the Father, and it is only by revelation that they could ascend to him in the heavens, leaving behind the corrupt physical creation, the goal of humankind.

Theophilus leaves no space for such a pantheon. In his account of the creation, he uses the "Spirit of God mov[ing] upon the face of the waters" described in Genesis 1:2 as

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540. Knight, 9–10.

541. *Gospel of Truth*, trans. R. M. Grant, Early Christian Writing, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/gospeltruth.html.

542. *Gospel of Truth*.

543. *Gospel of Truth*.

an opportunity to note that "the Spirit[,] . . . . holding the place of light, was between the water and the heaven, in order that the darkness might not in any way communicate with the heaven, which was nearer God, before God said, Let there be light."[544] That heaven, at that point, had no stars or planets. "In the very beginning, therefore, of the history and genesis of the world," Theophilus notes, "the holy Scripture spoke not concerning this firmament [which we see], but concerning another heaven, which is to us invisible, after which this heaven which we see has been called firmament."[545] That firmament would be created *later*, on the fourth day, after the separation of land from water and light from darkness, and that for a very specific reason: "because God, who possesses foreknowledge, knew the follies of the vain philosophers, that they were going to say, that the things which grow on the earth are produced from the heavenly bodies, so as to exclude God. In order, therefore, that the truth might be obvious, the plants and seeds were produced prior to the heavenly bodies, for what is posterior cannot produce that which is prior."[546] Moreover, Theophilus uses these bodies to set up a set of allegories that leave no place for aeons creating an imperfect physical world: "The sun is a type of God, and the moon of man. And as the sun far surpasses the moon in power and glory, so far does God surpass man."[547] For Theophilus, the moon's waxing and waning forges, not so much a metaphor of imperfection, but "a pattern of the future resurrection," denoting the very plan of God—one in which humans are brought back to life, not ascending to the heavens, but rather "if [they] should incline to the things of immortality, keeping the commandment of God,

544. Theophilus, *To Autolycus*, 2.13.
545. Theophilus, 2.13.
546. Theophilus, 2.15.
547. Theophilus, 2.15.

[they] should receive as reward from Him immortality, and should become God; but if, on the other hand, [they] should turn to the things of death, disobeying God, [they] should [themselves] be the cause of death to [themselves]."[548] In Theophilus's reckoning, the heavens become an allegory to teach us lessons instead of being part of a pantheon of gradually corrupted aeons. "The brilliant and bright stars are an imitation of the prophets," Theophilus claims, "and therefore they remain fixed, not declining, nor passing from place to place. And those which hold the second place in brightness, are types of the people of the righteous. And those, again, which change their position, and flee from place to place, which also are called planets, they too are a type of the men who have wandered from God, abandoning His law and commandments."[549] The allegory, thus, serves a didactic purpose, rather than a metaphysical one. It is a type of allegorizing more in keeping with what would come to be seen as the Antiochene tradition, one that does not dismiss the literalness of the biblical account to claim some spiritual lesson but rather resides first and foremost in the literal scripture, with allegory an afterthought.

Serapion

Theophilus's use of such an allegory to dismiss Gnostic teachings probably exemplifies how Gnosticism remained a competitive form of belief to Christians in Antioch. The degree to which this was so is demonstrated by an incident, alluded to earlier, that would occur a few years after Theophilus is supposed to have written, during the time of the Antiochene bishop Serapion. Not much is known about Serapion beyond the fact that he wrote various letters

548. Theophilus, 2.15, 2.27.
549. Theophilus, 2.15.

and works against false teachings.[550] Jerome credits him as leading an "ascetic life."[551] Eusebius places him as the eighth bishop of Antioch, after Maximinus, about whom we know even less.[552]

The incident involved a group at Rhossus with whom Serapion had met. That group apparently had had some kind of dispute over the use of a work called the *Gospel of Peter*.[553] Serapion had supposed the work to be harmless—perhaps, at least one scholar has proposed, he thought it a Gospel harmony in line with that created by Theophilus.[554] Thus, he had allowed its continued reading, but later, learning that those who were espousing its use were involved with some kind of heresy that seems to have been related to docetism, he felt compelled to read it himself.[555] In it, he found "many things in accordance with the true doctrine of the Saviour, but some things added to that doctrine."[556] As such, he reminded the church that "we, brethren, receive both Peter and the other apostles as Christ; but we reject intelligently the writings falsely ascribed to them, knowing that such were not handed down to us."[557] In an attempt to set things in order, he, thus, promised the church, "I will hasten to come to you again. Therefore, brethren, expect me shortly."[558] The fact that Serapion, in his letter, refers

550. Jerome, *On Illustrious Men*, chap. 41; Eusebius, *Church History*, 6.12.1.

551. Jerome, *On Illustrious Men*, chap. 41.

552. Eusebius, *Church History*, 5.19.1, 5.22.

553. Eusebius, 6.12.2, 6.12.4.

554. Eusebius, 6.12.4; Charles E. Hill, "Serapion of Antioch, the *Gospel of Peter*, and a Four Gospel Canon," paper presented at the Fifteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford, 2007, reprinted in *Studia Patristica*, vols. 44–49, ed. J. Baun, A. Cameron, M. Edwards, and M. Vinzent (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 340.

555. Eusebius, *Church History*, 6.12.4, 6.12.6.

556. Eusebius, *Church History*, 6.12.6, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250106.htm.

557. Eusebius, 6.12.3.

558. Eusebius, 6.12.4.

to the members as "you" and "brethren," while at the same time referring to those who had put forward the gospel as "they" and "their" shows that some of the people at Rhossus had, by the time that Serapion wrote, splintered off to forge a separate fellowship, probably under the leadership of one Marcianus to whom Serapion refers.[559]

Previously noted were a couple of phrases to which scholars point to denote how the work could be considered docetic. Another odd difference that points in that direction is the heavy use of the terms "Son of God" and "Lord" to refer to Jesus; nowhere in the document is Jesus called "Christ" and only once, in reference to the physical "body of Jesus," is his name used.[560] That said, Theophilus, too, always referred to Jesus Christ as the Word or as the Son, so the author of the document may simply have been following within such a tradition. Indeed, the author's use of such heavily visual descriptions as that of "pluck[ing] the nails from the hands of the Lord" before laying him in the tomb could lend credence to a nondocetic reading.[561] Indeed, the main thrust of the work focuses on the resurrection of Jesus.[562] One can read such lines as Jesus's keeping "silence, as one feeling no pain," not as docetic additions, but as additions intended to forefront the degree to which Jesus had come to terms with his sacrifice and submission to death.[563] With a martyrologic focus, the work could also be read as being more in keeping with yet another heresy that was popular in the late second century and that Eusebius credits Serapion as writing against: Montanism.

Montanism, also called Phrygianism, had come into being around 156 CE, with the prophecies of Montanus and

559. Eusebius, 6.12.4–5; Hill, "Serapion of Antioch," 338–339.

560. *Gospel of Peter*, 1.2.3; P. M. Head, "On the Christology of the Gospel of Peter," *Vigiliae Christianae* 46, no. 3 (September 1992): 211.

561. *Gospel of Peter*, 1.6.21; Head, "On the Christology," 212, 216.

562. Head, "On the Christology," 217.

563. *Gospel of Peter*, 1.4.10; Head, "On the Christology," 212.

his prophetesses Maximilla and Prisca, or Priscilla, near the region of Phrygia in the middle of Asia Minor and spread east and west.[564] Its focus, in its early years, was primarily on the prophecies uttered by these teachers as they were "possessed of the Holy Spirit," which took the form of a kind of ecstasy in which the prophet lost control of his or her mental faculties.[565] As such, these prophets did not speak as inspired by God but, rather, claimed that God was literally taking over their bodies to communicate.[566] "I am the Lord God, the Almighty, dwelling in a man," Montanus is accused of stating.[567] And in another place: "Neither angel nor messenger, but I the Lord, God, the Father, have come."[568] Although the group was orthodox in most of its teachings, doctrines that came to be affiliated with it included the dissolution of marriage, a preference for celibacy, various fastings, and eventually, a longing for martyrdom.[569] "Seek not to die on bridal beds," Tertullian

564. Chapman, "Montanists"; Epiphanius of Salamis, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, books 2 and 3: *De Fide*, 2nd. rev. ed., trans. Frank Williams (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 2.48.14.2.

565. Eusebius, *Church History*, 5.16.8; Chapman, "Montanists"; Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 2.48.1.3, 2.48.3.11, 2.48.4.3.

566. Chapman, "Montanists."

567. Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 2.48.11.1.

568. Epiphanius, 2.48.11.9. At least one scholar questions the idea that the Montanists taught that they became the actual Holy Spirit. Indeed, most of our understanding comes from their enemies, who may well have misunderstood—deliberately or not—such statements. Christine Trevett, *Montanism: Gender, Authority, and the New Prophecy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 78. In Trevett's view, the Montanists may have represented a strain of nonhierarchical, prophetically oriented Christianity that seemed a threat to the increasingly "official" faith. Trevett, 146. Montanist-affiliated documents such as the *Acts of Perpetua and Felicitas*, one of the earliest Christian narratives to record a belief in Christians going to heaven upon death, however, hardly present views in line with those of the apostles.

569. Chapman, "Montanists"; Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 2.48.1.3–4, 2.48.8.8, 2.48.9.6; Eusebius, *Church History*, 5.18.2.

would write, for example, shortly after his conversion to the Montanist sect around 211 CE, "nor in miscarriages, nor in soft fevers, but to die the martyr's death, that He may be glorified who has suffered for you."[570] Serapion's warning regarding "this lying band of the new prophecy" comes in another letter, this one to church leaders Caricus and Pontius, wherein he included the work of the Apollonarius, or Apollonius, bishop of Hierapolis, against the Phrygians.[571] Although the church acted to remove believers who accepted the new prophets, the popularity of the sect is evident in its sending out of its own ministry and in the degree to which the church felt compelled to write about and act against it.[572] Indeed, Eusebius notes that many bishops signed on to a statement condemning the Montanists: "Aelius Publius Julius, bishop of Debeltum, a colony of Thrace. As God lives in the heavens, the blessed Sotas in Anchialus desired to cast the demon out of Priscilla, but the hypocrites did not permit him."[573]

The one other work Eusebius notes as being affiliated with Serapion regards "Domninus, who, in the time of persecution, fell away from faith in Christ to the Jewish will-worship."[574] Together, these three works—one involving a Christian moving toward Judaism, and two letters involving heretical groups—demonstrate that the same

570. Tertullian, *De Fuga in Persecutione*, trans. S. Thelwall, chap. 9, from *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 4, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, N.Y.: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0409.htm; John Chapman, "Tertullian," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 14 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912), New Advent, http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14520c.htm.

571. Eusebius, *Church History*, 5.19.1–2, 6.12.1.

572. Eusebius, 5.16.4, 5.16.10, 5.18.2; Chapman, "Montanists."

573. Eusebius, *Church History*, 5.19.3–4.

574. Eusebius, 6.12.1.

concerns emphasized in the Ignatian letters continued to be issues as the second century drew to a close. That Eusebius claims to have access to only these three works shows also the degree to which the church, even another century later, when Eusebius wrote his history, continued to focus on and be affected by these particular issues. Intriguingly, Ignatius's solution to the issue of false teaching—namely, not to meet apart from the bishop—seems also to be implied by the manner in which Eusebius portrays Serapion. The bishop of Antioch writes to other bishops, spreading word regarding Montanist teaching and what another bishop has written against it; he writes his own letter to another follower who has left the faith for Judaism, explaining where that teaching goes wrong; and he writes to a congregation that has been split apart by the promotion of a heretical book, promising to come to set things in order among those who remain. This is an active bishop, working in concert with the larger church body to promote unity across a well-organized and hierarchically endowed faith. That presentation is not necessarily out of tune with the church presented in the New Testament, wherein the apostles and elders meet in a council in Acts 15 to hash out how to deal with non-Jewish adherents to the new faith and where Paul ordains elders in the cities that he visits (Acts 14:23).

However, such a presentation is not without its problems, as Serapion's own role in the church demonstrates, for outside Eusebius, we find mention of Serapion being actively involved in the Church of the East—most specifically with Edessa, at the border between Syria and the Parthian kingdom. As discussed more fully in the next chapter, that church, after facing a period of persecution, would find itself without a leader and unable to ordain its next bishop. As such, it would send its next bishop, Palut, to receive ordination at the hands of the Antiochene bishop, who in

turn, the documents make plain, received his own authority from Rome.[575] This, however, is decidedly not historical. It seems, rather, that somewhere along the line, the Roman church established an order of succession to justify whatever authority that church claimed to have and thus whatever doctrines it was teaching. As such, lists of succession became normative across various congregations, including that of Antioch. In that way, diversity of teaching and practice within the church could be kept to a minimum, and those pushed outside the church's prescribed order could be permanently labeled as descending not from Jesus and the apostles but from some heretical leader.

Nearly a century after Eusebius, we find an Antiochene church fighting with Judaizers, just as it had done from its earliest days. In this church, however, Judaizing meant not just avoiding Pharisaical injunctions on purity and how to keep the Sabbath. It meant observing anything that even smacked of the old Jewish religion. In the years 386–387, the Antiochene priest John Chrysostom would deliver eight sermons against the Jews, many of those sermons right around the Jewish festival days.[576] In introducing his series, Chrysostom would provide his motivation: "The festivals of the pitiful and miserable Jews are soon to march upon us one after the other and in quick succession: the feast of Trumpets, the feast of Tabernacles, the fasts. There are many in our ranks who say they think as we do. Yet some

575. *The Doctrine of Addai, the Apostle*, sec. 50, Early Church Fathers—Additional Texts, https://www.tertullian.org/fathers/addai_2_text.htm; L. W. Barnard, "The Origins and Emergence of the Church in Edessa during the First Two Centuries A.D.," *Vigiliae Christianae* 22, no. 3 (Sept. 1968): 174, Jstor, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1581930; F. Crawford Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity: St. Margaret's Lectures on the Syriac-Speaking Church* (London: John Murray, 1904), 18–19; Downey, *History of Antioch in Syria*, 304; Neusner, *History of the Jews*, 167.

576. Meeks and Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch*, 83.

of these are going to watch the festivals and others will join the Jews in keeping their feasts and observing their fasts. I wish to drive this perverse custom from the Church right now."[577] That Chrysostom felt moved to give such a set of messages evidences the continued force of Jewish rites within the Christian faith.[578] That for many decades the church met in individual houses no doubt meant that, despite the portrayal of the church by men like Ignatius, Serapion, and especially Eusebius, diversity of doctrine, practice, and even leadership had long been fostered by the small gatherings of believers.[579] The efforts of such men could only go so far. Although Chrysostom gave his messages on Sunday,[580] for many, Jewish practices remained compatible with Christianity; no doubt, as evidenced by the *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, some Jewish practices had continued, at least among those at Antioch and in the East, sometimes right alongside new practices enjoined by those in the West.[581] The placement of Peter as the first in a line of bishops at Antioch, before taking his station as the first at Rome, allowed the Christian church as directed by men like Chrysostom and Eusebius, to depict itself as in line with apostolic authority going back to the time of Jesus, whether such was the reality or not. Our history of the church of Antioch, thus, is colored by political causes that manifested only many centuries later. The truth remains something less certain.

577. John Chrysostom, "Homily I," 1.5, in *Eight Homilies against the Jews*, Wikisource, November 17, 2020, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Eight_Homilies_Against_the_Jews.

578. Meeks and Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch*, 34.

579. Meeks and Wilken, 24.

580. Chrysostom, "Homily I," 1.1.

581. Karin Hedner Zetterholm, "Jewish-Behaving Gentiles," 333.

BABYLON

Parthian Kings, 2 BCE to 228 CE

All dates are approximate. Even some names are open for debate, given rival claimants to the throne and joint kings, which can change the order depending on which source one follows.

Phraataces/Phraates V	2 BCE–4 CE
Orodes III	4–6
Vonones I	8–12
Artabanus II	10–38
Vardanes	40–45
Gotarzes II	40–51
Vonones II	51
Vologases I	51–79
Pacorus II	78–110
Artabanus III (rival king)	80–82
Osroes (joint ruler)	110–129
Vologases II	110–147
Parthmaspates (rival king)	116
Mithridates IV (rival king)	140
Vologases III	147–191
Vologases IV	191–208
Vologases V	208–228
Artabanus IV (joint ruler)	216–224

Source: Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art, "List of Rulers of the Parthian Empire," in *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–), http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/paru/hd_paru.htm; with additional information from Edward C. D. Hopkins, "Chronological Listing of Parthian Rulers," Parthia.com, February 26, 2021, https://www.parthia.com/parthia_chrono.htm.

The Primacy of Peter?

Peter closes his first letter by writing that the church "at Babylon . . . saluteth you" (1 Pet. 5:13). This closing poses a problem for some readers because at the time that Peter was supposedly writing, Babylon was apparently no longer much of a city. Many, if not most, scholars have taken Babylon as being a cypher for Rome, a suggestion that may date back to the late first or early second century according to Eusebius, who uses the authority of Clement of Alexandria and Papius to make his claim.[1] Indeed, some claim that the assertion that Peter literally means Babylon arose only with the rise of Protestantism.[2] As we'll see, Pe-

1. Eusebius, *Church History*, 2.15.2. Unfortunately, the texts that Eusebius references but does not quote have been lost. On the preference for Babylon as Rome, see, for example, the expositions on "1 Peter 5:13," in *Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers* and *MacLaren's Expositions*, both available at Bible Hub, https://biblehub.com/commentaries/1_peter/5-13.htm; "What Does 1 Peter 5:13 Mean?," BibleRef, https://www.bibleref.com/1-Peter/5/1-Peter-5-13.html; Daniel H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 4th ed. (Clarksville, Md.: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1995), 756; Sean McDowell, *The Fate of the Apostles: Examining the Martyrdom Accounts of the Closest Followers of Jesus* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 59; and "Rome, Babylon, and 1 Peter 5:13," *NicholasGuilda.com: History and Religion* blog, August 9, 2020, http://nicholasgulda.com/index.php/2020/08/09/rome-babylon-and-1-peter-513/#_ftn7.

2. Such is the assertion of *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, which credits Erasmus (1466–1535) as the first to make the claim, followed then by various others with anti-Catholic agendas. Joseph MacRory, "St. Mark," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 9 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910), New Advent, http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09672c.htm. On the preference for Babylon as literal, see, for example, the expositions on "1 Peter 5:13," in *Meyer's NT Commentary*, the *Pulpit Commentary*, *Vincent's Word Studies*, *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary*, *Matthew Poole's Commentary*, *Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*, and the *Geneva Study Bible*, all available at Bible Hub, https://biblehub.com/commentaries/1_peter/5-13.htm; David John Albert, "Peter in Rome: A Review of the Literary Record in the Light of Scriptural Evidence," master's thesis, Ambassador College, Pasadena, Calif., 1973, 10–12, HWA Library, https://www.hwalibrary.com/cgi

ter's place in Babylon is emblematic of the ways in which the early history of Christianity in Mesopotamia has been molded—much as has Antioch's—to fit the political and theological agendas of various groups over time such that the church's real history has been substantially lost.

The idea that Babylon was necessarily a cypher for Rome, however, is not without its own issues. A common objection raised by those who prefer to take Babylon as literal is that Peter would have had little reason to use such a cypher and would have not likely been understood had he, as the general use of the metaphor, according to those who hold this position, arose decades after Peter's death, with Roman persecution and the popularization of John's Revelation.[3] Of course, such an objection is not an issue if the letter was written closer to the end of the first century, especially if *after* Revelation, and "Peter" was merely the pseudonym for some other author, as some critics posit, claiming the Greek to be too polished for an unlearned Galilean fisherman.[4] Such a conclusion fails to take into account the widespread use of Greek in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee; that the references to the Old Testament in the New are often from a version of the Greek Septuagint, suggesting that the disciples and Jesus were familiar with Greek versions and used them; that Peter could not have traveled as widely to the West as he is credited with doing without some knowledge of spoken Greek; and that Peter likely wrote his letter with the aid of a scribe, who would have polished the written Greek.[5] Of course, whether

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-bin/get/hwa.cgi?action=get_acthesis&InfoID=1404225410; William Steuart McBirnie, *The Search for the Twelve Apostles* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1972), 55, 57.

3. "1 Peter 5:13," in *Meyer's NT Commentary*, *Vincent's Word Studies*, and *Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*.

4. See, for examples, the introduction to 1 Peter at Early Christian Writings, http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/1peter.html.

5. On use of Greek in Palestine, see Martin Hengel, *The "Hellenization" of Judaea in the First Century after Christ* (Philadelphia: Trinity

Peter was the real author, we cannot know for certain; however, were he not, it would have been a major coup in terms of the pseudonymous author's work that it was accepted by so many so early that it would become part of the New Testament canon. Indeed, it seems unlikely that it would or could have ended up as canon were it not by Peter.[6]

Press International, 1989), 8. Hengel notes that Galilee, Samaria, and Judea were effectively trilingual—Aramaic for ordinary speech, Hebrew for religious worship, Greek for business—and that Jewish people who spoke primarily Greek made up as much as 20 percent of Jerusalem's population and significant portions of the population in other cities along the coast of Palestine. Hengel, 8, 10, 14. "The notion that Peter himself could not have been a competent Greek speaker is simply unfounded," Markus Bockmuehl notes in his exploration of Peter in early church recollections. "His childhood in Bethsaida, a village with little Jewish presence, in which his brother Andrew and close friend Philip were known exclusively by their Greek names, would have ensured his ability to speak tolerable Greek from a young age, even if not perhaps to read or write." Markus Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter in Scripture and Memory: The New Testament Apostle in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2012), 127. On the use of the Septuagint, see "The Use of the Septuagint in the New Testament," The Lampstand, https://thelampstand.com.au/the-use-of-the-septuagint-in-the-new-testament/. Comparisons between the Septuagint, the New Testament, and the Masoretic text can be found at "Septuagint Quotes in the New Testament," Scripture Catholic, https://www.scripturecatholic.com/septuagint-quotes-new-testament/; Joel Kalvesmaki, "Septuagint Online," January 1999, http://www.kalvesmaki.com/LXX/NTChart.htm. In 1 Peter 5:12, Peter notes that "by Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly." For a full discussion of the use of Greek among the original disciples, see "Appendix D: The New Testament Was Originally in Greek," in *A Faithful Version: The Original Bible Restored*, 2nd ed. (Hollister, Calif.: York Publishing, 2009), https://afaithfulversion.org/appendices-d/.

6. Full arguments for Peter's authorship of 1 Peter are laid out in Frank F. Judd Jr., "The Case for Petrine Authorship of 1 Peter," in *The Ministry of Peter, the Chief Apostle*, ed. Frank F. Judd Jr., Eric D. Huntsman, and Shon D. Hopkins (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2014), 247–265; and Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter in Scripture*, 127–128.

If we were to assume that Peter really was writing from the ancient town of Babylon, what sort of city would he have been writing from, and what would the Christian community have looked like in the region as the religion developed over its first two centuries? No doubt, Babylon's importance as a center of government and population had long since passed by the time that Peter was apparently writing in the mid-first century CE, the kingdoms that had come to dominate the land having chosen other cities for their capitals. For the Parthians, whose kingdom dominated the area in the first and second centuries CE, that capital was Ctesiphon about thirty-five miles north of Babylon. Before them, the Seleucids, who controlled the area in the third and second centuries BCE, had chosen Seleucia, just across the river, as their headquarters. Babylon, though possibly still holding some importance as a center of religion and culture, fell into disrepair.[7]

Indeed, writers from the period indicate that the city offered little of the glory it had once had. Writing about 50 BCE, for example, the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus noted that the central temple that had once been "exceedingly high" had fallen "into ruins," "while as for the palaces and the other buildings, time has either entirely effaced them or left them in ruins; and in fact of Babylon itself but a small part is inhabited at this time, and most of the area within its walls is given over to agriculture."[8] Some ten to thirty years later, the ancient writer Strabo, in his *Geography*, would note not only that Seleucia had grown "larger than Babylon" but that "the greater part of Babylon is so deserted that one would not hesitate to say with one of the

7. Trevor Bryce, *Babylonia: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 110–111.

8. Diodorus Siculus, *The Library of History*, trans. Charles Henry Oldfather, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1933), 2.9.4–9, https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Diodorus_Siculus/2A*.html#7.

comic poets said in reference to the Megalopolitans in Arcadia: 'The Great City is a great desert.'"[9] A century or so after Siculus's account, around the time that Peter would have been writing his letter, assuming he indeed wrote it, the city's prospects do not seem to have improved much. We know this from Pliny the Elder's description in his *Natural History*. Although he found the temple of Jupiter Belus to be "still in existence," in "all other respects [Babylon had] been reduced to a desert, having been drained of its population in consequence of its vicinity to Seleucia, founded for that purpose by Nicator, at a distance of ninety miles, on the confluence of the Tigris and the canal that leads from the Euphrates."[10] And yet another century or so after that, Cassius Dio would describe the city at the time of Trajan, who visited it around 116 CE, as "nothing but mounds and stones and ruins," though Trajan did manage to offer a sacrifice in "the room where [Alexander the Great] had died" and "saw the asphalt out of which the walls of Babylon had been built."[11]

If we take the historian Jacob Neusner, who wrote extensively on the history of the Jewish people in the area, as our authority, what few people still lived in Babylon would have been primarily Babylonians, but there also could have been a proportionately large Jewish minority, one, if we take Siculus's description as accurate, primarily engaged

9. Strabo, *Geography*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1932), 16.1.5, https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Strabo/16A*.html.

10. Pliny the Elder, *The Natural History*, ed. and trans. John Bostock and H. T. Riley (London: Taylor and Francis, 1855), 6.30, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0137%3Abook%3D6%3Achapter%3D30#note-link1.

11. Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, trans. Ernest Cary, 68.30.1, 68.27.1, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 7 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1925), https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Cassius_Dio/68*.html.

in farming.[12] As such, little beyond what I quoted above has survived about the city as it existed during this period if much was being written about it at all.

The area around Babylon—indeed, the lands that forged what had once been its empire—however, would hold a very large population. Pliny the Elder, for example, claimed that Seleucia, which had been built to replace Babylon, held some six hundred thousand people, with Ctesiphon, just across the river, holding an unspecified but lesser number of others.[13] Of the people in the area, Jewish inhabitants made up a significant portion. The first-century Jewish thinker Philo of Alexandria noted in his *On the Embassy to Gaius* that "Babylon and many others of the satrapies of the east were occupied by the Jews, . . . for every year sacred messengers are sent to convey large amounts of gold and silver to the temple."[14] Josephus noted that "there were Jews in great numbers" in Babylon near the start of Herod the Great's reign in Judea, about 36 BCE, though Josephus's translator William Whiston notes that this Babylon was likely not the original but a nearby city.[15] Another possibility is simply that city name "Babylon" had come to stand in for the region, much as the northern kingdom of Israel's capital of Samaria had come to stand in for it as a name. Around the time of Jesus's ministry, a semi-independent Jewish kingdom even ruled over a portion of the land around the ancient Mesopotamian city. However, "a great slaughter of the Jews that dwelt at Babylon" (fifty thousand by one estimate) would take place within a few

12. Jacob Neusner, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia*, vol. 1: *The Parthian Period* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), 15.

13. Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 6.30.

14. Philo, *On the Embassy to Gaius*, trans. Charles Duke Yonge, 31.216, Early Jewish Writings, http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/text/philo/book40.html.

15. Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, trans. William Whiston, 15.2.2, Project Gutenberg, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2848/2848-h. See chapter 15.2.2, note 1, for Whiston's comment.

years of Jesus's death in response to a war between the Jewish ruler Anileus and the Parthian Mithridates, and the Jewish kingdom would disappear.[16] Even so, the Jewish population in the area would remain significant—much of it having immigrated to Seleucia—as evidenced by the writing, a few centuries later, of the Babylonian Talmud, based around traditions of the Jewish rabbis of Mesopotamia.[17]

One major problem with documenting Peter's experience at Babylon, besides the dearth of historical documents about the Parthian kingdom in general, is that outside Peter's mention of Babylon in his first letter, little early tradition ties him to the area—or indeed, to the churches of the East. William Steuart McBirnie claims in his work *The Search for the Twelve Apostles* that Peter likely went to Babylon in the early 40s CE, when Acts 12:17 cryptically notes that he "went into another place" after escaping execution by Herod Agrippa I.[18] Hiding the location to which Peter fled would have been an attempt to protect him from Jewish persecution but also Roman, insofar as a trip to Parthia would have been one to what was frequently enemy territory, though clearly travel to and through Parthia among Jewish people was not uncommon, somewhat discounting the idea that Peter might need to hide such a journey, at least from the Romans.[19] The claim that Babylon was that "other place" would also likely date Peter's first letter to a

16. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.9.6, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2848/2848-h/2848-h.htm#link182HCH0009; George Rawlinson, *Parthia* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1893), 254.

17. Rawlinson, *Parthia*, 253.

18. McBirnie, *Search for the Twelve Apostles*, 56–57.

19. On Jewish correspondence and travel between Jerusalem and Babylonia in the early first century CE, see Neusner, *History of the Jews*, 42. The whereabouts of Peter during his time in "another place" are the subject of much conjecture. Paul R. Finch, for example, argues that Peter likely went to Britain during this time, using similar reasoning regarding Roman enemy territory. Paul R. Finch, *Beyond Acts:*

much earlier period than even most conservative scholars would assign it. Indeed, if Peter is the author of both 1 and 2 Peter, Peter likely wrote them relatively close together, given that he actually denotes in 2 Peter 3:1 that he writes "this second epistle" (as if no other letters interceded) to "stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance," a claim he makes more than once in the letter (see 2 Peter 1:12–15), suggesting his eminent death. Although it's possible Peter went to Babylon later, we're still left with little evidence outside Peter's first letter. Indeed, as Markus Bockmuehl notes, "Strikingly, the memories of Eastern writers, rather than claiming Peter and his apostolic authority for their own, associate him with Rome. . . . Additionally, there are several Eastern hints at his martyrdom, sometimes specified as having taken place in Rome."[20] Bockmuehl postulates three reasons this might be so. One is that Peter simply didn't spend much time in the area. A second is that much local memory of Peter's work was expunged in the disappearance of Jewish Christians from Palestine in the Jewish wars of 70 and more especially 135 CE. A third, related to the second, is that "in the context of persecution and of the revolts against Rome, it is not difficult to see the attraction—in view of Roman and Jewish hostility—of a 'protective anonymity' for those who were personally acquainted with a Christian ringleader who either was or had been a fugitive and was possibly executed as a subversive criminal."[21] The last point is drawn from Richard Bauckham's assertions in *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, in which he hypothesizes that the reason the account of Lazarus's resurrection was left unrecounted until John's Gospel was to protect him from those who may have attempted

New Perspectives in New Testament History (Palm Bay, Fla.: Sunrise Publications, 2003), 277.

20. Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter in Scripture*, 96.

21. Bockmuehl, 96–97, quote on 97.

to kill him.[22] Similarly, Peter goes unnamed in Mark as the one who cuts off the servant of the high priest's ear (Mark 14:47) but is named in John (John 18:10), after his death would have made such anonymity unnecessary.

The Jewish Diaspora and Other Apostles in the East

Although Peter's interaction with Babylonian Jewish believers is not verifiable, numerous traditions tie other apostles to the area—Jude/Thaddeus, Simon the Zealot, Matthew, Bartholomew, John, Philip, and most especially Thomas, who, according to Eusebius, was allotted Parthia as his field of mission.[23] Thomas, in fact, Eusebius claims, is the one who actually sent Thaddeus to the East, though notably to Edessa, at the intersection of Syria and northern Mesopotamia, rather than to the southern region of Babylon, and the Thaddeus he sent was likely a different one, called Addai in Eastern traditions and numbered among the seventy (Luke 10:1) rather than the twelve.[24] (Andrew,

22. Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 196.

23. McBirnie, *Search for the Twelve Apostles*, 202, 208, 231; Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.1.1.

24. Eusebius, *Church History*, 1.13.4, 1.13.10, 2.1.5. Eusebius specifically notes that "Thomas, one of the twelve apostles, under divine impulse sent Thaddeus, who was also numbered among the seventy disciples of Christ." Eusebius, *Church History*, trans. Arthur Cushman McGiffert, 1.13.4, from *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, vol. 1, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Buffalo, N.Y.: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890), revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250101.htm. Likewise, Pseudo-Hippolytus lists the Thaddeus that was sent to Augarus (of Edessa) among the seventy. Jude, by contrast, is listed among the twelve. Pseudo-Hippolytus, "On the Twelve Apostles," 8, and "On the Seventy Disciples," 4, both in *On the Apostles and Disciples*, New Advent, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0524.htm.

too, is said to have passed through the Edessene region on his way to the kingdom of Armenia along the coast of the Black Sea on his first missionary journey, a region to which Matthias also is credited with traveling.)[25] Pseudo-Hippolytus lists "all Mesopotamia" as one of the regions covered by Jude/Thaddeus, and in one later, thirteenth-century tradition, Jude/Thaddeus and Simon the Zealot are said to have been martyred at about the same time in Persia, after having traveled together through Syria and Mesopotamia.[26] Pseudo-Hippolytus also notes Matthew as having died "at Hierees, *a town* of Parthia."[27] Another thirteenth-century tradition ties Philip's early ministry to Scythia and the Russian steppe, a journey that would have taken him through parts of Mesopotamia.[28] Augustine, in the fourth century, claimed that John's first epistle was written to the Parthians.[29] Numerous traditions,

25. George Alexandrou, "The Astonishing Missionary Journeys of the Apostle Andrew," *Road to Emmaus* 5, no. 4: 20–21, reprinted as part 2 in *Orthodox Christianity*, December 15, 2010, https://www.pravoslavie.ru/43507.html; McBirnie, *Search for the Twelve Apostles*, 243; "Matthias, of the 70, and of 12 Apostles of Christ," *Bible Saints and Scoundrels*, https://biblesaintsandscoundrels.wordpress.com/2019/07/29/matthias-of-the-70-and-of-12-apostles-of-christ/.

26. Pseudo-Hippolytus, "On the Twelve Apostles," 8; McBirnie, *Search for the Twelve Apostles*, 231. Thaddeus and Simon's martyrdom tale can be found in Jacobus de Vorgine, *The Golden Legend; or, Lives of the Saints*, vol. 6 (1275), *Medieval Sourcebook*, Fordham University, https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/goldenlegend/GoldenLegend-Volume6.asp#Simon.

27. Pseudo-Hippolytus, "On the Twelve Apostles," 7.

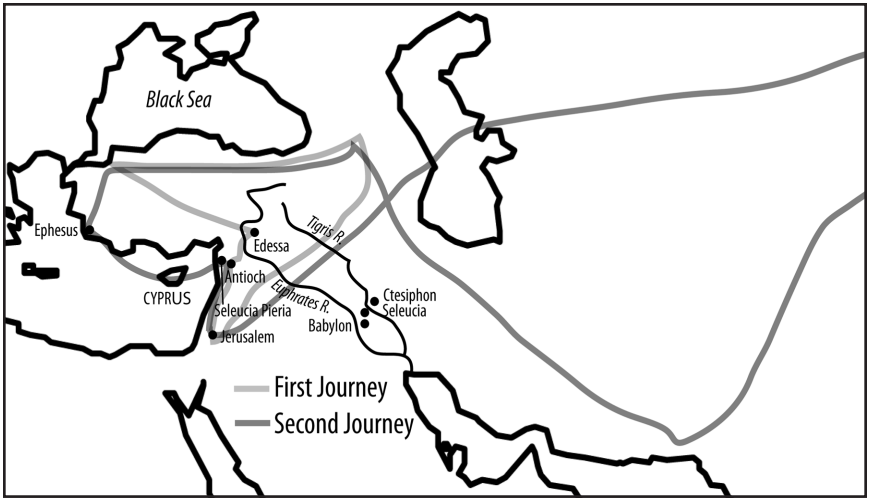
28. Vorgine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. 3, https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/goldenlegend/GoldenLegend-Volume3.asp#Philip%20the%20Apostle; McBirnie, *Search for the Twelve Apostles*, 123; "Phillip, of the 12 Apostles of Christ," *Bible Saints and Scoundrels*, https://biblesaintsandscoundrels.wordpress.com/2019/06/03/philip-of-the-12-apostles-of-christ/.

29. "Acts 2:9," *John Gill's Exposition of the Bible*, Bible Study Tools, https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/acts-2-9.html; "1 John 1:1," *Jamieson-Fauset-Brown Commentary*, Bible Hub, https://biblehub.com/commentaries

meanwhile, including oral ones among India's Thomasine Christians and the likely third-century and largely legendary *Acts of Thomas*, tie Thomas to India, an area to which travel through the region where Babylon was would have been conducive, though other common routes north of southern Mesopotamia or south through Africa or Arabia would have also been possible.[30] William Steuart McBirnie even goes so far as to claim that "it is evident that Thomas visited Babylon," though he draws mostly on later traditions as proof, quoting among them a Roman bishop and an episcopal priest, who each claim that Babylon itself became the "Patriarchate of the East," one of five patriarchates—cities from which regional bishops ruled—created

/jfb/1_john/1.htm; Augustine, *Homilies on the Epistle of St. John to the Parthians*, trans. H. Browne, Eternal Word Television Network, https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/homilies-on-the-epistle-of-st-john-to-the-parthians-11782. Alas, as editor Philip Schaff notes of Augustine's *Homilies*, "The tradition according to which St. John preached the Gospel in Parthia rests (so far as appears) on no ancient authority, and perhaps has no other foundation than the superscription itself." Augustine, *Homilies on the Epistle of St. John to the Parthians*, "Prologue," note 1988, Christian Ethereal Library, https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf107.iv.iii.html. That both John and Philip may have ended up in Asia Minor and were likely close friends, originating from nearby Galilean towns, could be a source of the idea that John traveled to the East, if indeed Philip did; the Gospel of John is the only one that includes Philip's interactions with Jesus. McBirnie, *Search for the Twelve Apostles*, 122–124.

30. On oral traditions, see Sean McDowell, "Did the Apostle Thomas Minister in India?," Sean McDowell's blog, February 18, 2016, https://seanmcdowell.org/blog/did-the-apostle-thomas-minister-in-india; and Janny Y. Strain, "'This I Say Not as One Doubting': Traditions of the Apostle Thomas from the Beginning of the Common Era through 800 CE," Honors Projects 22, Illinois Wesleyan University, 2013, 38–58, https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/religion_honproj/22. On trade routes, see Strain, 7, 39–40, 44, 47; and Catherine Heszer, "Crossing Enemy Lines: Network Connections between Palestinian and Babylonian Sages in Late Antiquity," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 46 (2015), 229. Thomas's time in India is explored more fully in McDowell, *Fate of the Apostles*, chap. 9, "The Martyrdom of Thomas," 157–174.



The apostle Andrew's possible first and second journeys

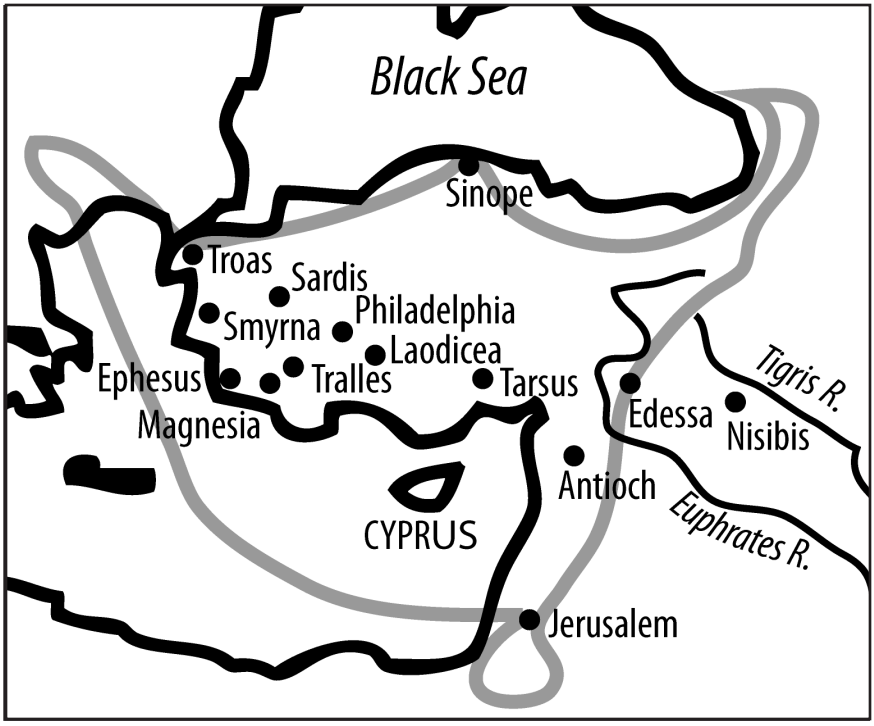
Map based on those presented in George Alexandrou, "The Astonishing Missionary JourOney of the Apostle Andrew," *Road to Emmaus* 5, no. 4 (Fall 2004): 18–19, 22–23, https://www.roadtoemmaus.net/s/19The_Astonishing_Missionary_Journeys.pdf

by the apostles, alongside Alexandria, Antioch, Rome, and Constantinople.[31] The idea that the apostles themselves founded the patriarchates, however, especially in some of the cities noted, seems unlikely, given that Byzantium was neither a large city nor one known for its importance to Christianity until after Constantine renamed it Constantinople in the fourth century.[32] Bartholomew also is said to have traveled to India with Thomas, passing through Babylon along the way.[33] Virtually all of these traditions, how-

31. McBirnie, *Search for the Twelve Apostles*, 144–145.

32. "Byzantine Christianity: Part 1: Orthodox Churches," Encyclopedia.com, https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/byzantine-christianity.

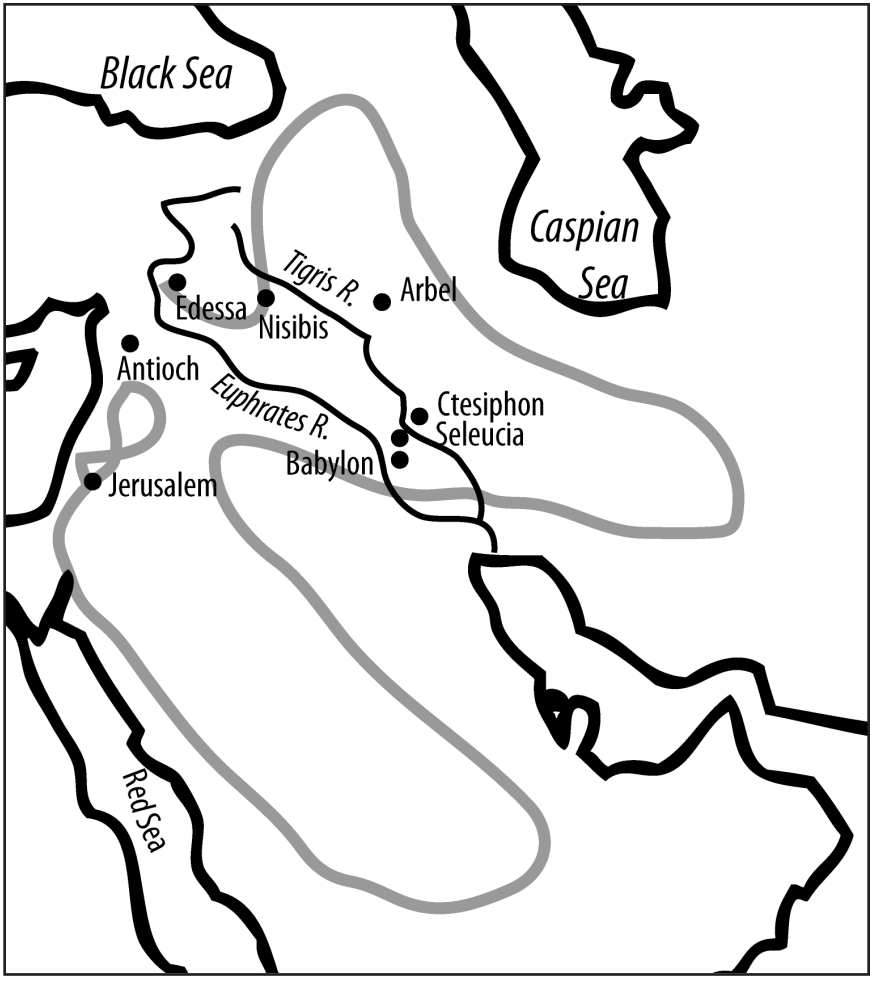
33. McBirnie, *Search for the Twelve Apostles*, 158; Bartholomew's travel to India is also noted in Pseudo-Hippolytus, "On the Twelve Apostles," 6.



The apostle Matthias's possible journey

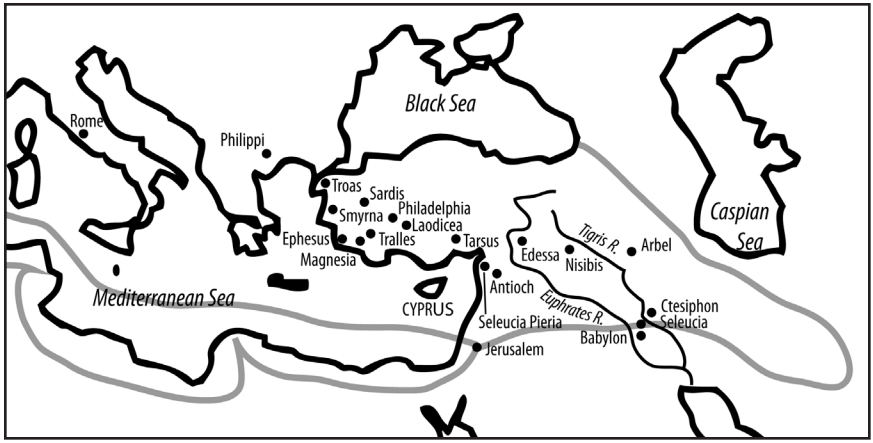
Map based on that at the blog *Bible Saints & Scoundrels*, https://biblesaintsandscoundrels.wordpress.com/2019/08/05/the-journeys-of-the-12-apostles-of-christ/.

ever, suffer from similar issues that put the Peter's travel to Babylon in doubt: a lack of early and reliable sources, paired with possible aspirations among later adherents to tie their faith to early and prominent teachers in order to legitimate their beliefs and practices. Indeed, as we will see, the written traditions of early Christianity in the East that we do have exhibit a faith quite different from that recorded in the New Testament, one more in keeping with long-standing local practices or slightly later outside ones, suggesting that followers made significant changes in response to said practices, quite possibly sometime after the passing away of the first generation of believers.



The apostle Jude's possible journey

Map based on that at the blog *Bible Saints & Scoundrels*, https://biblesaintsandscoundrels.wordpress.com/2019/08/05/the-journeys-of-the-12-apostles-of-christ/.

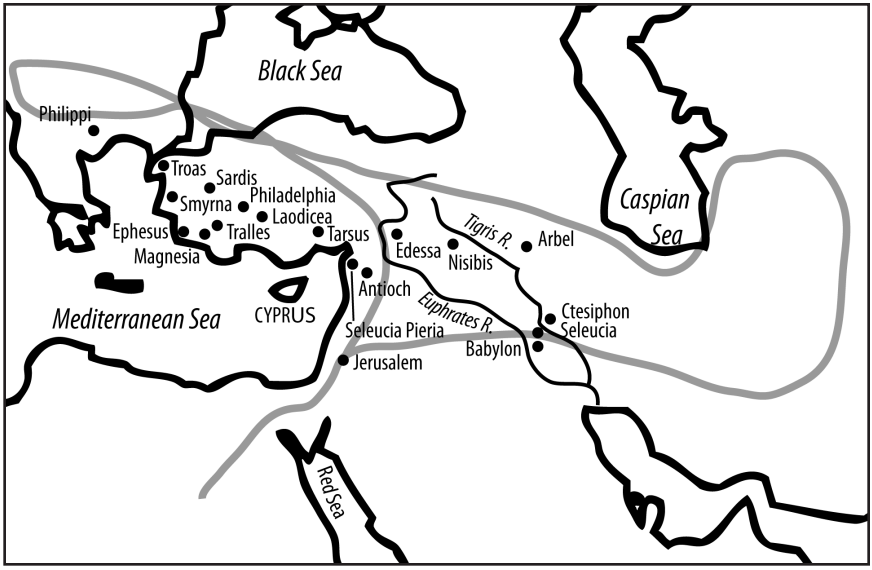


The apostle Simon the Zealot's possible journeys

Simon may have traveled even to Britain and then into the east, where he may have been martyred.

Map based on that at the blog *Bible Saints & Scoundrels*, https://biblesaintsandscoundrels.wordpress.com/2019/08/05/the-journeys-of-the-12-apostles-of-christ/.

What can be said about the spread of Christian teachings in Parthia and, by extension, into the region once dominated by the city of Babylon is that it would have likely begun, not among the twelve apostles, but among lay people. Acts 2:9 references "Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia" as being present at Peter's sermon in Jerusalem on the first Pentecost following Jesus's death. Such pilgrims to the city for the Jewish festival would likely have returned home sometime later, bringing with them the "apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42). Although Acts notes that "all that believed were together" (Acts 2:44) and that they continued "daily with one accord in the temple" (Acts 2:46), the condition was likely temporary and may, in fact, apply chiefly to those who remained at Jerusalem. We can surmise this from Acts 8:1, which notes the there was "a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem," implying that



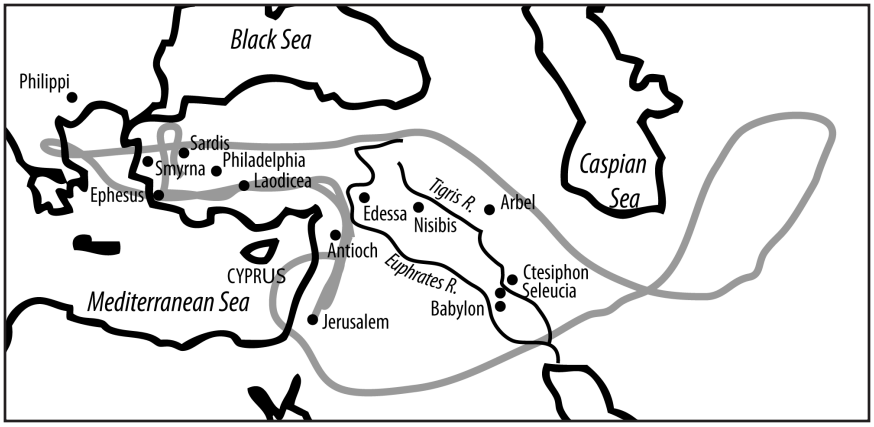
The apostle Matthew's possible journey

Map based on that at the blog *Bible Saints & Scoundrels*, https://biblesaintsandscoundrels.wordpress.com/2019/08/05/the-journeys-of-the-12-apostles-of-christ/.

other congregations were already coming into being. And certainly, the fallout of the persecution—the Jerusalem church's scattering "abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria"—would have meant that some believers likely would have eventually returned to their nations of origin.[34]

Many scholars believe that the spread of Christianity in Mesopotamia would have begun among Jewish merchants and tradespeople who brought the message with

34. Some scholars argue that the nationalities listed in Acts 2:9 represented not pilgrims but immigrants to Jerusalem from said lands. Paul Kroll, "Acts 2:1–11," section "Jews from Every Nation (2:5, 8–11)," *Studies in the Book of Acts*, Grace Communion Seminary, https://learn.gcs.edu/mod/book/view.php?id=4475&chapterid=51#:~:text=One%20authority%20estimated%20that%20over,2%3A42%2D43.%5D.



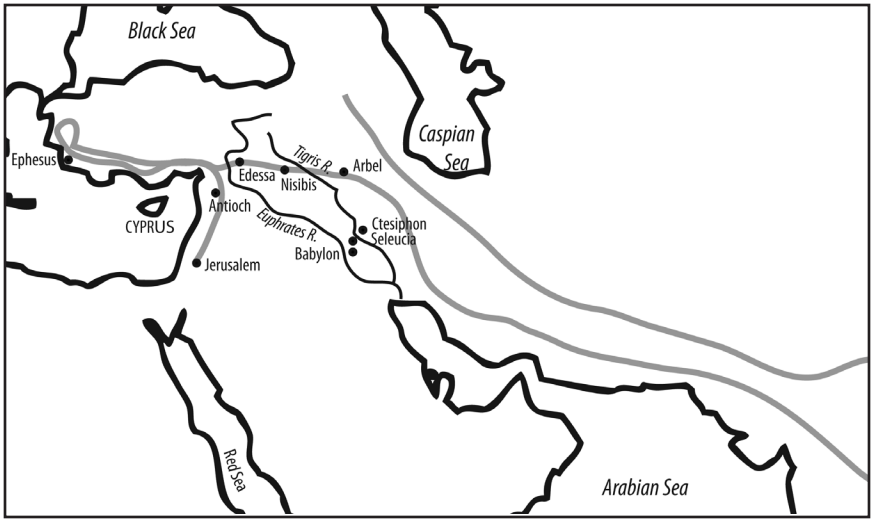
The apostle Philip's possible journeys

Map based on that at the blog *Bible Saints & Scoundrels*, https://biblesaintsandscoundrels.wordpress.com/2019/08/05/the-journeys-of-the-12-apostles-of-christ/.

them as they traveled through the region on their way between Judea and regions farther to the East, such as India, as part of the silk trade.[35] Jewish participation in the silk trade is sporadically evident in Talmudic sources, which record various Palestinian rabbinical teachers traveling into Mesopotamia, sometimes as part of the trade.[36] As Jacob Neusner notes, Jewish involvement in the trade was aided by the great number of Jewish communities scattered throughout Mesopotamia. Such communities could provide easy shelter for traveling merchants, sometimes

35. Neusner, *History of the Jews*, 88; Jacob Neusner, "Babylonia," *Jewish Encyclopedia*, https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/babylonia; T. V. Philip, *East of the Euphrates: Early Christianity in Asia* (India: CSS and ISPCK, 1998), chapter 3, Religion Online, https://www.religion-online.org/book-chapter/chapter-3-christianity-in-persia/, and chapter 4, https://www.religion-online.org/book-chapter/chapteri-i4-christianity-in-arabia-and-central-asia-christianity-among-the-arabs/; David G. K. Taylor, "The Coming of Christianity to Mesopotamia," chap. 4 in *The Syriac World*, ed. Daniel King (New York: Routledge, 2019), 82.

36. Neusner, *History of the Jews*, 89.



The apostle Bartholomew's possible journey

Map based on that at the blog *Bible Saints & Scoundrels*, https://biblesaintsandscoundrels.wordpress.com/2019/08/05/the-journeys-of-the-12-apostles-of-christ/.

in synagogue buildings that included temporary housing and other times in the homes of friends and family.[37] In addition, Galilee, largely settled by the Jewish people, served as a crossroads for international travel to and from the East and West. Traders from India and Afghanistan, and via middlemen, even from China, could bring goods to Babylon, Syria, and Palestine. There, Jewish weavers often transformed the silk into woven material that was then exported to Rome.[38] One of the few records we have of early Christianity in the region, *The Doctrine of Addai*, an early fourth- or fifth-century work that purports to tell the story of the conversion of much of the population of Edessa to Christianity in the first century, acknowledges such conditions: "The Jews also, conversant with the Law

37. Neusner, 90; Heszer, "Crossing Enemy Lines," 231.
38. Neusner, *History of the Jews*, 89–92.

and the Prophets, who carried on merchandise in silks, were also persuaded and became disciples, and made confession in Christ, that He is the Son of the living God."[39] Further confirmation may be present in the *Odes of Solomon*, a set of forty-two Psalms—essentially a hymnbook—that some scholars trace to first-century Edessene Jewish Christians.[40] In them, as the historian Samuel Hugh Moffett notes, can be found such Christian ideas as being "circumcised . . . by His Holy Spirit" and the sign of "the upright cross," yet without the anti-Jewish stigma that would cloud many later works, as it praises the conversion of the Gentiles.[41]

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39. *The Doctrine of Addai, the Apostle*, sec. 32, Early Church Fathers—Additional Texts, https://www.tertullian.org/fathers/addai_2_text.htm; fourth-century dating from L. W. Barnard, "The Origins and Emergence of the Church in Edessa during the First Two Centuries A.D.," *Vigiliae Christianae* 22, no. 3 (Sept. 1968): 162, Jstor, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1581930; fifth-century dating from John Chapman, "Doctrine of Addai," *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company), New Advent, http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05088a.htm; and David G. K. Taylor, "Coming of Christianity to Mesopotamia," 76. The fact that Eusebius, writing in the early fourth-century, records some of the same traditions denotes that at least some of *The Doctrine* was pulling from information that was available earlier than the fifth century; certain details, however, would seem to date it later.

40. Samuel Hugh Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia*, vol. 1: *Beginnings to 1500* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1998), 52–53.

41. *Odes of Solomon*, trans. James Charlesworth, Early Christian Writings, 11.2, 27.3, 10.5, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/odes.html; Moffett, *History of Christianity in Asia*, 52–53. Even if we accord early Jewish Christian authorship, the *Odes* are not without oddities that would seem strange not only with more orthodox views but that accord better with the later Gnostic-tinged Syriac ideas of Bardesanes and Aphrahat, such as the idea of the Holy Spirit as God the Mother: "The Son is the cup, and the Father is He who was milked; and the Holy Spirit is She who milked Him." *Odes of Solomon*, 19.2. On Aphrahat and Holy Spirit, see F. Crawford Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity: St. Margaret's Lectures on the Syriac-Speaking Church* (London: John Murray, 1904), 214–215; on Bardesanes, see Moffett, 67.

The spread of followers of Jesus among the Jewish people of the diaspora would have accorded easy access for the apostles' eventual travels. Although the synoptic Gospels include a mandate from Jesus to his disciples "to preach the Kingdom of God" during his ministry (Luke 9:5), specifically to "the house of Israel" (Matt. 10:6) and not to Gentiles or Samaritans (Matt. 10:5), the logistical aspect of the instructions likely carried over to the time following his death, when he told them to "go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19–20). Among those instructions were directions to "enquire who in [a given city or town they visited] is worthy; and there abide" (Matt. 10:11). They were to "in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give" and not "go from house to house" (Luke 10:7). "Worthy" people could have easily been those who had already accepted the Gospel and thus would have been willing to house one of Jesus's sent-out ones. Indeed, *The Doctrine of Addai* suggests that that is just the sort of thing that happened. In it, Addai, when he comes to Edessa, is said to have "dwelt at the house of Tobias, son of Tobias the Jew, who was of Palestine."[42] Alas, many anachronisms in the document suggest that the work, if not wholly fictional, was manipulated to serve the purposes of later secular and church authorities.

Edessa or Arbel? The Doctrine of Addai or The Acts of Mar Mari?

As one of the few early documents we have regarding the early church in Mesopotamia, *The Doctrine of Addai* has come to have substantial influence with regard to how the

42. *Doctrine of Addai*, sec. 15.

church's history in this region is perceived. Edessa, rather than Ctesiphon, Seleucia, or other cities farther south or east, has come to be seen as an early center of Christianity. Indeed, its key location along east-west and north-south trade routes, and along the border between the Roman and Parthian Empires, in the Parthian vassal state of Osroene, would have made it an important stop for not only traders but also missionaries, both Jewish and Christian, including to southern Mesopotamia and whatever existed of the ancient city of Babylon.[43]

Another important center of early Christianity in the region would have been Arbel, capital of the Parthian vassal state of Adiabene, just to the east of Osroene, about fifty miles east of the Tigris River. Like Edessa, it was an important trading center along well-established routes, and as with that other city, early Jewish believers likely played key roles in the foundation of the Christian community, as much of the city, including its gentry, had earlier converted to the Jewish faith.[44] The conversion is recounted by Josephus this way: "A certain Jewish merchant, whose name was Ananias, got among the women that belonged to the king [Izates, before he ascended the throne around 30 CE], and taught them to worship God according to the Jewish religion. He, moreover, by their means, became known to Izates, and persuaded him, in like manner, to embrace that religion. . . . [I]t also happened that Helena [Izates's mother], about the same time, was instructed by a certain other Jew and went over to them."[45] Izates became a God-

43. Amir Harrak, "Was Edessa or Adiabene the Gateway for the Christianization of Mesopotamia?" in *The Levant: Crossroads of Late Antiquity*, ed. Ellen Bradshaw Aitken and John M. Fossey (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2014), 165–166; Moffett, *History of Christianity in Asia*, 46.

44. Harrak, "Was Edessa or Adiabene the Gateway?," 165.

45. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 20.2.3, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2848/2848-h/2848-h.htm#link2HCH0002.

fearer, embracing the Jewish faith but not adhering fully to its customs. As Josephus tells the story, however, that soon proved not to be enough: "And when he perceived that his mother was highly pleased with the Jewish customs, he made haste to change, and to embrace them entirely; and as he supposed that he could not be thoroughly a Jew unless he were circumcised, he was ready to have it done."[46] For fear of Izates's place in the kingdom, which at that time was still made up largely of non-Jewish peoples, however, both Ananias and Helena persuaded him not to go through with circumcision. Ananias reasoned that Izates "might worship God without being circumcised, even though he did resolve to follow the Jewish law entirely, which worship of God was of a superior nature to circumcision."[47] But the reasoning would not stick. A while later,

> a certain other Jew that came out of Galilee, whose name was Eleazar, and who was esteemed very skillful in the learning of his country, persuaded [Izates] to do the thing; for as he entered into his palace to salute him, and found him reading the law of Moses, he said to him, "Thou dost not consider, O king! that thou unjustly breakest the principal of those laws, and art injurious to God himself, [by omitting to be circumcised]; for thou oughtest not only to read them, but chiefly to prac-

46. Josephus, 20.2.4.

47. Josephus, 20.2.4. *Ellicott's Commentary* ties Ananias to the one sent to heal Paul in Acts 9:10, given the similar stance with regard to circumcision, but the name was a common one among Jewish people at the time, and no mention is made of Josephus of the man being a Christian; indeed, Ananias's stance with Izates regarding circumcision would have likely predated both the Jerusalem conference in Acts 15 and the conversion of Cornelius in Acts 10. Nevertheless, the argument regarding circumcision between Ananias and the Jew Eleazar is an intriguing parallel to that among the earliest Jewish Christians. "Acts 9:10," *Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*, Bible Hub, https://biblehub.com/acts/9-10.htm#commentary.

> tice what they enjoin thee. How long wilt thou continue uncircumcised? But if thou hast not yet read the law about circumcision, and dost not know how great impiety thou art guilty of by neglecting it, read it now." When the king had heard what he said, he delayed the thing no longer, but retired to another room, and sent for a surgeon, and did what he was commanded to do.[48]

The conversion of the king and his mother eventually inspired other nobles to do the same, for as Josephus notes, "When the king's brother, Monobazus, and his other kindred, saw how Izates, by his piety to God, was become greatly esteemed by all men, they also had a desire to leave the religion of their country, and to embrace the customs of the Jews."[49] Some years later, Helena would donate food to the inhabitants of Jerusalem to offset the famine that afflicted Judah during Claudius's reign, just as Paul would gather food from church members in other parts of the Roman Empire for the brethren at Jerusalem (Acts 11:28–30).[50]

Scholars argue regarding whether Christianity found a welcome home in Edessa or Arbel first and whether the two traditions were related to one another or independent of each other.[51] Certainly, trade routes from Judah to the east would favor Edessa as the closer of the two cities and

48. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 20.2.4.

49. Josephus, 20.4.1, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2848/2848-h/2848-h.htm#link202HCH0004.

50. Josephus, 20.2.5.

51. Philip, *East of the Euphrates*, chap. 3; for a fuller exploration of the subject, see, for example, Harrak, "Was Edessa or Adiabene the Gateway?," 166–180; Jacob Neusner, "The Conversion of Adiabene to Christianity," *Numen* 13, no. 2 (August 1966): 144–150; Michael Thomas, "The Conversions of Adiabene and Edessa in Syriac Christianity and Judaism: The Relations of Jews and Christians in Northern Mesopotamia in Antiquity," *Concordia Theological Journal* 7, no. 1 (2020): 10–33.

thus the more likely to first receive the message of traveling Jewish merchants or even apostles and possibly be the source of conversion of the other; Adiabene's early and verifiable conversion to the Jewish faith among the nobility, however, might have made for a more conducive environment, and a few scholars argue that Edessa was no real trade city, given its location on a difficult-to-cross section of the Euphrates, suggesting a reverse east-to-west passage of the Gospel.[52] As with those of Edessa, the Arbel traditions are contradictory and anachronistic, such that whatever history we have seems to have been manipulated to suit the needs of later authorities. As in the Edessene account, Addai often plays an important role in Arbel. In one tradition, related in *The Chronicle of Arbela*, Addai is credited with laying hands on the first bishop of the city, Peqida; in another, related in *The Acts of Mar Mari*, it is Addai's disciple Mari who first brings Christianity to Adiabene.[53] The traditions in both these works, as well as in *The Doctrine of Addai*, would date the coming of Christianity to these northern Mesopotamian regions to the first century CE or early second century, and indeed, the widespread

52. Thomas, "Conversions of Adiabene and Edessa," 18–20; J. B. Segal, *Edessa: The Blessed City* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 42.

53. *The Chronicle of Arbela*, trans. Timothy Kroll (Belgium: Catholic University of America, 1985), sec. 1, https://web.archive.org/web/20171026053945/https://www.sasanika.org/wp-content/uploads/ChronicleofArbela.pdf; *The Acts of Mar Mari*, trans. Amir Harrak (Boston: Leiden, 2005), secs. 6–8. *The Chronicle* is dated to the sixth century; *The Acts of Mar Mari* to the fifth. Peter Kawerau, "*Chronicle of Arbela*," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, October 18, 2011, https://iranicaonline.org/articles/chronicle-of-arbela; *Acts of Mar Mari*, xvii; W. A. Wigram, *An Introduction to the History of the Asian Church; or The Church of the Sassanid Persian Empires, 100–640 A.D.* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1910), 27.

dissemination of Christianity by the end of the second century would imply such missionary trips.[54]

The story of the coming of Christianity to the East, as laid out in *The Doctrine of Addai*, begins with a set of Parthian emissaries to Jerusalem witnessing the works of Jesus and the persecution he endured from some of the Jewish people. Their report inspires Abgar, the king of Edessa, to write Jesus a letter:

> Abgar Ukkama, to Jesus, the Good Physician, who has appeared in the country of Jerusalem. My Lord: Peace. I have heard of Thee and of Thy healing, that it is not by medicines and roots Thou healest, but by Thy word Thou openest the eyes of the blind, Thou makest the lame to walk, cleansest the lepers, and makest the deaf to hear. And unclean spirits and lunatics, and those tormented, them Thou healest by Thy word; Thou also raisest the dead. And when I heard of these great wonders which Thou doest, I decided in my mind that either Thou art God, who hast come down from heaven and doest these things, or Thou art the Son of God, who doest all these things. Therefore, I have written to request of Thee to come to me who adore Thee, and to heal the disease which I have, as I believe in Thee. This also I have heard, that the Jews murmur against Thee and persecute Thee, and even seek to crucify Thee, and contemplate treating Thee cruelly. I possess one small and beautiful

54. Neusner, *History of the Jews*, 167; David G. K. Taylor, "Coming of Christianity to Mesopotamia," 76; Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, 19, 35; Philip, *East of the Euphrates*, introduction, https://www.religion-online.org/book-chapter/introduction-27/, and chap. 1, https://www.religion-online.org/book-chapter/chapter-1-asia-the-cradle-of-christianity/. The anointing of Peqida would have occurred in 104 CE, according to *The Chronicle of Arbela*, sec. 1.

> city, and it is sufficient for both to dwell in it in quietness.[55]

Jesus returns a message promising to send one of his disciples to Abgar to restore the king's health after Jesus's death and ascension to heaven. That disciple proves to be Addai, sent by Thomas, who proceeds to cure the king—and a few others—and is then invited to speak to the other nobles. After a large sector of the nobility converts, Abgar assembles the town to listen to Addai, which results in yet more conversions. In Edessa, altars to other gods are torn down, a church is built, and other ministers are appointed. Soon, the message spreads to other settlements in the region—and eventually to "all this country of Mesopotamia."[56] Even the Roman emperor Tiberius hears the Gospel, the result of a letter sent by Abgar, and the emperor punishes the Jews in the Holy Land who crucified Jesus accordingly. Finally, Addai grows old. On his deathbed, he appoints one Aggai to take his place. However, once King Abgar dies, one of Abgar's sons, not so favorably disposed to Christianity, kills Aggai by breaking his legs. Unable to lay hands on his own successor in time, Aggai sends the next designated bishop, Palut, who had been appointed as a deacon by Addai, to Antioch to be anointed by Serapion. Although the document recounts a number of works—miracles, most especially healings, seem to be the main manner in which the gospel is initially spread and people converted—its emphasis is on Addai's teaching, with long passages given over to his sermons, which detail, among other things,

> the signs of our Lord and His wonders, and the glorious miracles which He wrought, and His divine triumphs, and His ascension to His Father;

55. *Doctrine of Addai*, sec. 4. The letter is also quoted by Eusebius in his *Church History*, 1.13.6–8.

56. *Doctrine of Addai*, sec. 47.

> and how they [the apostles] received powers and authorities at the time that He ascended, by which same power he had healed . . . ; and how he made them know that which would be revealed at the end of times, and in the consummation of all creatures, and the resuscitation and resurrection, which is about to be for all men, and the separation which is to be between the sheep and the goats, and between the faithful and the unbelieving.[57]

The Acts of Mar Mari, by contrast, focuses largely on events—most especially, again miracles and healings that convince others to follow Jesus—with much less given over to preaching. It begins with the same episodes as those recounted in *The Doctrine of Addai*—the letter to Jesus, Addai's travel to King Abgar—but then veers off toward following Mari, one of Addai's disciples, as he is sent to the east and south. (In many traditions Palut and Mari are the same person, which provides for much confusion.)[58] Mari

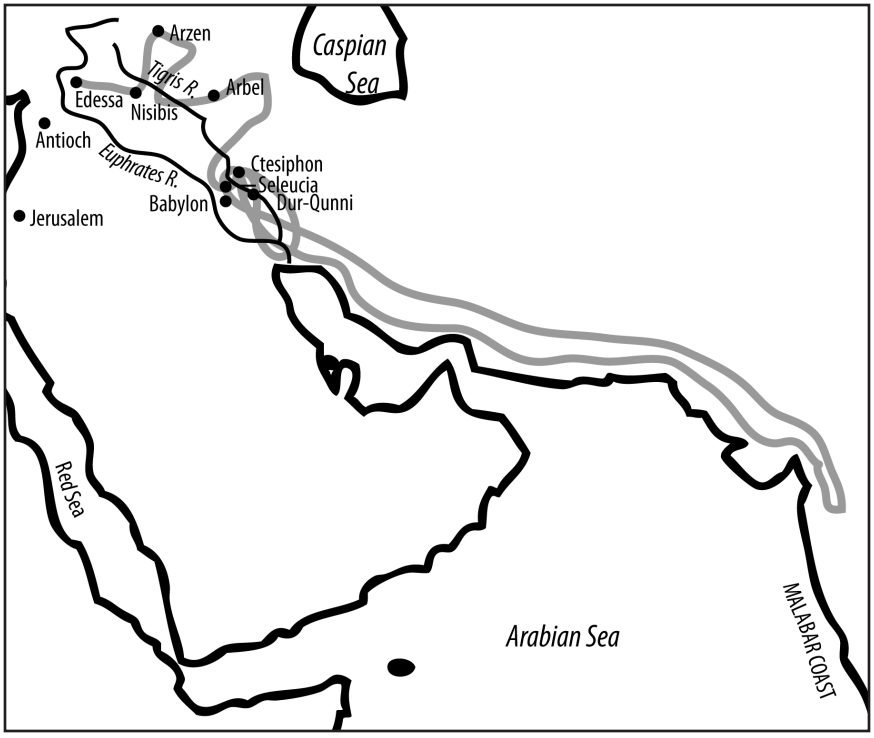
57. *Doctrine of Addai*, secs. 9–10.

58. Confusion arises not just because of the changed names but because there is a Mari who is said to be one of the seventy or seventy-two. Sometimes, this Mari is identified with Palut, and sometimes the two Maris are said to be distinct. See, for example, "Saint Mari" at People Pill (https://peoplepill.com/people/saint-mari), which enforces the distinction between the two Maris, and "Addai and Mari, SS.," at Encyclopedia.com (https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/addai-and-mari-ss), which places Mari among the seventy-two and alongside Addai but doesn't explicitly run him in with Palut. The Wikipedia entries for Mari, by contrast, explicitly state that he was once named Palut. See, for example, "List of Patriarchs of the Church of the East, Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_patriarchs_of_the_Church_of_the_East. Moffett questions the existence of Palut, barely mentions Mar Mari, and does not appear to run the two together. Moffett, *History of Christianity in Asia*, 60, 70. Neither Mari nor Palut's name shows up on the list of the seventy rendered by pseudo-Hippolytus. Throughout the volume, I use the name preferred by the source material, be it Mar Mari or Palut, even if they can be read as being the same person.

first visits Nisibis, in northern Mesopotamia between the Euphrates and the Tigris, then Arbel, among other locales. In Arbel, Mari heals the king of leprosy, resulting in his conversion, which takes place alongside other miracles and conversions among the people.[59] After that, Mari descends along the Tigris River to Seleucia and Ctesiphon, where his efforts are, initially, much less successful, because, at least in Seleucia, the people are "evil pagans" with "no concern other than eating, drinking, and getting drunk."[60] Until then, the author notes, "Christianity [had] not exist[ed] in the region, nor could they find anyone who would receive them in his house for God's sake,"[61] suggesting that in the earlier locations, others had preceded Mari. Here, however, Mari is reduced to renting a house in which to stay.[62] In despair, Mari writes back to Edessa, begging to return or to go elsewhere, but he is told, "You have no right to come here or to go elsewhere before you . . . bring plentiful yield."[63] As a result, he joins one of the town assemblies, where the usual assortment of miracles raises the expected converts. Other troubles are resolved in Ctesiphon by yet other miracles. Finally, Mari comes to lands where he detects "traces of Saint Thomas"; thus his journeys end, and he retires to Seleucia and Ctesiphon and then to the city of Dura d-Qunni, eventually appointing one Papa as bishop to replace him.[64]

As such, *Acts* makes the claim that Mari is the first Christian missionary to visit the lands where Babylon would have been. Curiously, little mention is made of Jewish people in the area. Even in Arbel, the people, including the king, are "worshipers of idols." Addai's stay with To-

59. *Acts of Mar Mari*, secs. 8–10.
60. *Acts of Mar Mari*, sec. 19.
61. *Acts of Mar Mari*, sec. 19.
62. *Acts of Mar Mari*, sec. 19.
63. *Acts of Mar Mari*, sec. 19.
64. *Acts of Mar Mari*, secs. 32–33.



Mar Mari's apparent journey as per *The Acts of Mar Mari*

After traversing lower Mesopotamia, Mar Mari is said to have "descended to the lower territories, where he detected the traces of Saint Thomas." *The Acts of Mar Mari*, trans. Amir Harrak (Boston: Leiden, 2005), sec. 32.

bias (Tubana, in *Acts*), near the start of the narrative, provides no mention of him being Jewish either. Outside the role that Jewish people played in Jesus's crucifixion and a brief mention that Mari "brought to the Christian faith many among the Jews and the pagans," they are absent.[65] The author appears to have had little interest in tying the Jewish people to the earliest Christian worship but rather

65. *Acts of Mar Mari*, sec. 30.

emphasizes the early roots of the faith primarily among the non-Jewish and especially among the empowered and upper classes.

That the work plays fast and loose with history is clear from the various events and people that play roles in the story but that do not belong to the time period in which the story is supposedly set. Mari, like Addai, is counted as one of the seventy, meaning that he would have been a contemporary of Jesus, even though the *Acts* note that he was sent out by Addai before his death.[66] As such, Mari's missionary activity would have occurred sometime in the first century CE. Indeed, Mari visits King Artaban II of Ctesiphon, who reigned from 18 to 38 CE, which would mean that much of Mari's mission occurred not just in the first century but within a few years after Jesus's death, quite possibly before the conversion of Cornelius in Joppa, the first recorded conversion of a gentile in the New Testament.[67] On this journey, Mari apparently not only abolished temples in many cities but set up church buildings in their place, much earlier than most historians posit such buildings were used, given that church meetings in New Testament times appear to have taken place chiefly in homes, when they were not part of a Jewish synagogue.[68] Of course, the author's deemphasis on Jewish believers

66. *Acts of Mar Mari*, secs. 1 and 6.

67. *Acts of Mar Mari*, sec. 26, p. 57n123. Dates for Cornelius's conversion are placed variously between 37 and 40 CE. The timeline for Acts at Bible Hub puts it at 37, https://biblehub.com/timeline/acts/1.htm. Blue Letter Bible puts it at 40, https://www.blueletterbible.org/study/pnt/pnt02.cfm.

68. *Acts of Mar Mari*, secs. 25, 29. As of 1989, the earliest dedicated Christian church building archeologists had found dated from the third century. It was in Dura-Europos, on the eastern border of modern-day Syria, and was a converted house. Vincent Branick, *The House Church in the Writings of Paul* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1989), 9. Dedicated church buildings begin to appear around 150 CE, most of them converted from homes; until then, actual homes appear to have been the typical meeting places. Branick, 129.

in the history means that the synagogue could play little role in such meetings. The book ends with Mari appointing Papa to replace him, but Papa's bishopric in Arbel did not start until sometime between 280 and 310 CE.[69] This means that the work is referring to a different Papa, that the work recounts events that occurred much later than espoused, or that the work has mixed earlier events with later ones. Both of the latter possibilities would suggest that the author's intent was to tie the later church's history to the early first century and to Jesus himself—essentially to rewrite history in a manner preferred for a particular agenda befitting the era. Indeed, David G. K. Taylor finds that the narrative's "hierarchy of conversion starting with Nisibis and its province, then Adiabene and Bet Garmai[,] . . . looks highly political" in "a sixth-century church that was intellectually dominated by Nisibis and its monasteries, while its leadership resided in Seleucia-Ctesiphon and the cities of Iran."[70]

The Doctrine of Addai features similar problems with chronology. Given Addai's identification as one of the seventy and his being sent out in direct response to a message between Jesus and the king of Edessa, the setting would seem to be one of the first century CE—and the early first century at that; other details, however, contradict that timing. For one, many of the incidents in the tale have parallels to historical incidents, many of them much later, that seem too closely aligned to be mere coincidences. Addai, for example, gives a long account to the nobles about "Protonice, the wife of the Emperor Claudius," visiting Jerusalem and discovering the true cross, through the miraculous resurrection of her daughter by its placement on her body.

69. *Acts of Mar Mari*, pp. 17n33, 77n148; Wigram, *Introduction to the History*, 26, 45.

70. David G. K. Taylor, "Coming of Christianity to Mesopotamia," 82.

This tale corresponds especially close to that of the visit to Jerusalem of Constantine's mother, Helena, some two centuries later, where she finds the true cross through the healing of a dying woman who touches it and the resurrection of a dead man who comes into contact with it.[71] In fact, in both accounts, three crosses are found, two belonging to those crucified with Jesus and one to Jesus himself, the latter being the only one through which these miracles occur. The conversion of Abgar and his court to Christianity, likewise, seems suspiciously similar to Josephus's account of the conversion of Izates and his court to Judaism.[72] Most scholars believe that the Abgar with whom Addai had contact would not have been Abgar V (the Black), whose reign would have coincided more closely with the purported timing of the account, but Abgar VIII (the Great), who reigned some 100 to 150 years later, if such contact happened at all.[73] The reason is that any evidence of the Christian faith among the noble class in Edessa dates from much later, and no records written at the time of Abgar V leave any indication that he or his consorts converted to Christianity; indeed, coinage in the city at the time still features "non-Christian religious symbols."[74]

There are other anachronisms. As Mari does in *The Acts of Mar Mari*, Addai sets up church buildings, an unlikely possibility in the early first century; he also ordains

71. Orazio Marucchi, "Archaeology of the Cross and Crucifix," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 4 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908), New Advent, http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04517a.htm.

72. Thomas, "Conversions of Adiabene and Edessa," 11; David G. K. Taylor, "Coming of Christianity to Mesopotamia," 73; Moffett, *History of Christianity in Asia*, 57.

73. Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, 26; Philip, *East of the Euphrates*, chap. 2, https://www.religion-online.org/book-chapter/chapter-2-christianity-in-edessa/.

74. "No early Syriac author (Bardaisan, Aphrahat, Ephrem, Liber Graduum) refers to Addai, or to king Abgar becoming a Christian." David G. K. Taylor, "Coming of Christianity to Mesopotamia," 74.

priests, an office not associated with the church until the late second century, though of course it may be only the terminology itself that is anachronistic, since the earlier term "bishop" came to be associated with "priest."[75] He also instructs his followers to "read every day before the people, . . . the Epistles of Paul, which Simon Peter sent us from the city of Rome, and the Acts of the twelve Apostles, which John, the son of Zebedee, sent us from Ephesus; these Books [in addition to the Law, Prophets, and Gospel] read ye in the churches of Christ, and with these read not any others," many works that would not have been available until the late first century at the earliest. Most conspicuous of all is Palut's ordination at the hand Serapion. The latter, as noted in the previous chapter, was bishop of Antioch in the years 190 to 212 CE or thereabouts, thus placing the events of the *Doctrine of Addai* in the second century, long after King Abgar V and Jesus could have cor-

75. On the rise of the Christian priesthood, see B. Le Roy Burkhart, "The Rise of the Christian Priesthood," *Journal of Religion* 22, no. 2 (April 1942): 187–204, Jstor, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1199051; Philip Jenkins, "Inventing the Christian Priesthood," *Anxious Bench* blog, November 13, 2017, Patheos, https://www.patheos.com/blogs/anxiousbench/2017/11/christian-clergy-became-priests/; and Francine Cardman, "Priesthood: Christian Priesthood," *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2005, Encyclopedia.com, https://www.encyclopedia.com/environment/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/priesthood-christian-priesthood. Clement of Rome was the first to compare Christian clergy to priests, but the first outright interchangeable use of terms for clergy and priesthood appears to have occurred around 200 CE in the writings of Tertullian. Cardman. Much confusion arises because the term "priest" in English derives from the Greek word meaning "presbyter" (*presbuteros*) but when translated to Latin often became *sacerdos*; the Greek term *hiereus* is that most often translated into "priest" in Protestant English Bibles, while *presbuteros* have become ministers and elders. Anthony Smith, "When Is a Priest Not a Priest?," Anthony Smith's blog, February 24, 2014, https://www.anthonysmith.me.uk/2014/02/24/when-is-a-priest-not-a-priest/; Auguste Boudinhon, "Priest," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 12 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911), http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12406a.htm.

responded. The tale also notes that Serapion himself was ordained by "Zephyrinus, Bishop of the city of Rome, from the succession of the hand of the priesthood of Simon Cephas."[76] Alas, Zephyrinus's own bishopric dates (202–218 CE) came after the start of Serapion's.[77] In other words, the author seems at pains to attempt to connect the Addai legend and the line of authorities in Edessa with the Roman church and, in turn, Peter, and further, to make the claim that "the source and centre of all Christianity in Mesopotamia is Edessa."[78] What we end up with is a few-decades-long chronology that draws from traditions linked to three different centuries and, as well, a faith that may not even represent what the earliest Eastern church professed, if indeed one could even say that there was a single church and a singular set of doctrines that can be ascertained.

The Travels of the Apostle Thomas

That *The Doctrine of Addai* and *The Acts of Mar Mari* may represent different and later strains of Christianity can be supported by a comparison with the traditions that have come down to us regarding the apostle Thomas. If we compare *The Gospel of Thomas*, *The Book of Thomas the Contender*, *The Acts of Thomas*—all conceivably written near Edessa[79]—and the various oral traditions preserved among the churches in India regarding Thomas, we find multiple versions of early Eastern Christianity that dif-

76. *Doctrine of Addai*, sec. 50; Neusner, *History of the Jews*, 167; Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, 18–19.

77. Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, 26.

78. David G. K. Taylor, "Coming of Christianity to Mesopotamia," 77; Sebastion Brock, "Eusebius and Syriac Christianity," chapter 7 in *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, ed. H. W. Attridge and G. Hata (Detroit: Wayne State University Press), 227–228.

79. Introduction to *The Book of Thomas the Contender*, Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/contender.html.

fer in significant ways. Of the written accounts noted, *The Gospel of Thomas* is generally considered to be the earliest, possibly written as early as the second half of the first century.[80] Unlike the four biblical Gospels, this one does not preserve events from Jesus's life but only "secret sayings which the living Jesus spoke and which Didymos Judas Thomas wrote down."[81] Through these sayings, the portrait of Jesus that emerges is one of a kind of Eastern mystic whose purpose is to impart eternal life through helping others to see that such life is already inside them, that everyone is already Jesus, the son of God. "When you come to know yourselves," Jesus tells his disciples, "then you will become known, and you will realize that it is you who are the sons of the living father."[82] "Whoever finds himself is superior to the world," Jesus notes elsewhere.[83] When he asks his disciples to compare him to others, responses include "righteous angel" and "wise philosopher." Thomas recognizes that he is "wholly incapable of saying whom [Jesus is] like," but in so doing, he calls Jesus his master and is rebuked: "I am not your master. Because you have drunk, you have become intoxicated from the bubbling spring which I have measured out."[84] The key is to realize that the master is inside one's self. As Jesus later notes, "He who will drink from my mouth will become like me. I myself shall become he, and the things that are hidden will be revealed to him."[85] Thomas, as Jesus's disciple, indeed, as his twin (the meaning of the Greek term *Didy-*

80. Introduction to *The Gospel of Thomas*, Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/thomas.html.

81. *The Gospel of Thomas*, trans. Thomas O. Lambdin, from *The Nag Hammadi Library*, rev. ed., ed. James M. Robinson (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1990), Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/thomas-lambdin.html.

82. *Gospel of Thomas*, saying 3.

83. *Gospel of Thomas*, saying 56.

84. *Gospel of Thomas*, saying 13.

85. *Gospel of Thomas*, saying 108.

mous), becomes, thus, another Jesus, sent to the world to bring enlightenment to others, through knowledge residing within the self. His gospel is simply a passing along of these instructions.

The Book of Thomas the Contender, likely written near the end of the second century,[86] preserves a conversation between Thomas and Jesus in which the latter provides Thomas with advice regarding how to reach enlightenment:

> Now, since it has been said that you are my twin and true companion, examine yourself, and learn who you are, in what way you exist, and how you will come to be. Since you will be called my brother, it is not fitting that you be ignorant of yourself. And I know that you have understood, because you had already understood that I am the knowledge of the truth. So while you accompany me, although you are uncomprehending, you have (in fact) already come to know, and you will be called "the one who knows himself." For he who has not known himself has known nothing, but he who has known himself has at the same time already achieved knowledge about the depth of the all. So then, you, my brother Thomas, have beheld what is obscure to men, that is, what they ignorantly stumble against.[87]

In this work, the role of asceticism, the need to remove desires of the flesh, as the means to that enlightenment is amplified (while it is more of a subtext in the earlier Gospel: "If you do not fast as regards the world, you will not

86. Introduction to *Book of Thomas the Contender*.

87. *The Book of Thomas the Contender*, trans. John D. Turner, from *The Nag Hammadi Library*, ed. James M. Robinson (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1990), Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/thomascontender.html.

find the kingdom").[88] "So just as the body of the beasts perishes," Jesus tells Thomas in the book, "so also will these formations perish. Do they not derive from intercourse like that of the beasts? If it, too derives from intercourse, how will it beget anything different from beasts? . . . Whenever all the elect abandon bestiality, then this light will withdraw up to its essence, and its essence will welcome it, since it is a good servant."[89] As such, Jesus concludes: "Watch and pray that you not come to be in the flesh, but rather that you come forth from the bondage of the bitterness of this life. And as you pray, you will find rest, for you have left behind the suffering and the disgrace. For when you come forth from the sufferings and passions of the body, you will receive rest from the good one, and you will reign with the king, you joined with him and he with you, from now on, for ever and ever, Amen."[90]

The late second-century or early third-century *Acts of Thomas*, which focuses on events in Thomas's ministry to India rather than Jesus's teachings, extends these concerns with asceticism into action, even as it moves away from concerns about knowing one's true self as the Jesus within to a more standard interpretation of an afterlife in heaven or hell brought about by good and bad works and lack of acceptance of Jesus as the Christ. Here, Thomas's twinship is taken to be more literal, with Jesus stepping in for Thomas as a lookalike on at least one occasion, when preaching to a just-married couple about the evils of the sexual act.[91] Other parallels between the two men arise during the course of the narrative, for example, with Thomas being smitten

88. *Gospel of Thomas*, saying 27.
89. *Book of Thomas the Contender*.
90. *Book of Thomas the Contender*.
91. *The Acts of Thomas*, from *The Apocryphal New Testament*, trans. M. R. James (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), sec. 12, Early Christian Writing, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/actsthomas.html.

when not speaking (cf. Matt. 26:61–67, Mark 14:60–65), with Thomas riding a colt into a city (cf. Matt. 21:7), with Thomas saying a version of the Lord's prayer before his death (cf. John 17), or with Thomas telling people of his ascent to heaven after death (cf. Matt. 28:1–10).[92] The plot is episodic and full of supernatural occurrences. At first refusing to follow the commission assigned to him by lot to go to India, Thomas is compelled to do so by Jesus by being sold, as a carpenter, into slavery to an Indian king.[93] On the journey, Thomas curses a man who hits him for not appropriately rejoicing at a marriage banquet, noting that the man's hand will be "dragged by dogs," such that when the curse comes true—the man being eaten by a lion and a dog returning the hand to the banqueters—Thomas comes to the attention of the king, who requests that Thomas bless the new couple: his daughter and her husband.[94] This he does and leaves, whereupon Thomas's brother, Jesus, returns to preach the aforementioned sermon and convinces the couple to "abstain from . . . foul intercourse" and to be "joined in another marriage" to "a true husband," one that is not temporal.[95]

Later, when Thomas meets the actual king to whom he had been sold, he promises to build for the noble a palace.[96] This he does by donating the items the king provides to the poor.[97] When the king discovers that Thomas has deceived him, he places Thomas in prison, but shortly thereafter, the king's brother dies and miraculously recovers.[98] In that death, the brother has received a vision of a grand palace in heaven that has been built for the king by Thomas, and

92. *Acts of Thomas*, secs. 6, 39, 144–149, 167, 169.
93. *Acts of Thomas*, sec. 2.
94. *Acts of Thomas*, secs. 6–9, quote in sec. 6.
95. *Acts of Thomas*, secs. 10–13, quotes in secs. 12 and 14.
96. *Acts of Thomas*, secs. 17–18.
97. *Acts of Thomas*, sec. 19.
98. *Acts of Thomas*, secs. 20–23.

Thomas is then released from jail.[99] "Only believe in the God that is preached by me," Thomas had told the king, "and thou shalt indeed be set free from this world, but from the world to come thou shalt receive life."[100] The king, now convinced, is baptized, along with his brother.[101]

Other adventures in other parts of India, with other kings, follow. Thomas rides a talking donkey, casts out demons, restores the dead to life, and baptizes many. Over and over, the narrative emphasizes the benefits of celibacy. One man goes so far as to murder his love interest, lest they be tempted into sexual union.[102] His hands miraculously withered as a result of his zealous action, the man seeks the aid of Thomas, who heals him and restores the woman's life.[103] The apostle seems more angry about the man's temptation toward having sex than he is about the murder itself: "O insane union how ruinest thou unto shamelessness!" he proclaims. "O unrestrained lust, how hast thou stirred up this man to do this!"[104] The woman on her recovery provides a long description of the torments of hell, to which she had been consigned, one might assume because of her own sexual desires.[105] Later, a noblewoman named Mygdonia converts to the teaching of Thomas and opts no longer to participate in marital relations with her husband, Charisius, which angers the latter and results in Thomas being imprisoned.[106] Others, including the wife of the king to whom Charisius complains, are converted to celibacy—and Jesus—as well, and Thomas is eventually put to death for his undesirable influence.[107]

99. *Acts of Thomas*, secs. 22–24.
100. *Acts of Thomas*, sec. 21.
101. *Acts of Thomas*, sec. 26.
102. *Acts of Thomas*, sec. 51.
103. *Acts of Thomas*, secs. 51–54.
104. *Acts of Thomas*, sec. 52.
105. *Acts of Thomas*, secs. 55–58.
106. *Acts of Thomas*, secs. 82–106.
107. *Acts of Thomas*, secs. 134–136, 163–164, 168.

Thomas's preaching in the narrative is often drawn from quotations from the New Testament. As with the other two works about Thomas discussed, such preaching emphasizes the need to remove one's self from physical concerns in order to embrace a higher order:

> Ye men that are come unto the assembly of Christ, and would believe on Jesus, take example hereby, and see that if ye be not lifted up, ye cannot see me who am little, and are not able to spy me out who am like unto you. If, then, ye cannot see me who am like you unless ye lift yourselves up a little from the earth, how can ye see him that dwelleth in the height and now is found in the depth, unless ye first lift yourselves up out of your former conversation, and your unprofitable deeds, and your desires that abide not, and the wealth that is left here, and the possession of earth that groweth old, and the raiment that corrupteth, and the beauty that waxeth old and vanisheth away, and yet more out of the whole body wherein all these things are stored up, and which groweth old and becometh dust, returning unto its own nature? For it is the body which maintaineth all these things. But rather believe on our Lord Jesus Christ, whom we preach, that your hope may be in him and in him ye may have life world without end, that he may become your fellow traveller in this land of error, and may be to you an harbour in this troublous sea. And he shall be to you a fountain springing up in this thirsty land and a chamber fill of food in this place of them that hunger, and a rest unto your souls, yea, and a physician for your bodies.[108]

108. *Acts of Thomas*, sec. 37.

However, there is less concern here with coming to recognize the Jesus within and more with avoiding sins that beset humankind. This can be seen, for example, in the response of the crowd to the above sermon:

> Then the multitude of them that were gathered together hearing these things wept, and said unto the apostle: O man of God, the God whom thou preachest, we dare not say that we are his, for the works which we have done are alien unto him and not pleasing to him; but if he will have compassion on us and pity us and save us, overlooking our former deeds, and will set us free from the evils which we committed being in error, and not impute them unto us nor make remembrance of our former sins, we will become his servants and will accomplish his will unto the end.[109]

Elsewhere, Thomas even makes note that "we too, if we fulfil not the burden of the commandments are not worthy to be preachers of this name, and hereafter shall we pay the price (punishment) of our own head."[110] And he explicitly states, "I am not Jesus, but I am his servant: I am not Christ, but I am his minister; I am not the Son of God, but I pray to become worthy of God."[111]

Still, the manuscript contains elements that hint at concerns about self-knowledge similar to those voiced in *The Gospel of Thomas* and *The Book of Thomas the Contender*. One way this is evident is in the manner in which so many seek to embrace the "true bridegroom," in essence making marriage into a spiritual union with the real self rather than "a partnership of corruption" with "men and women

109. *Acts of Thomas*, sec. 38.
110. *Acts of Thomas*, sec. 66.
111. *Acts of Thomas*, sec. 160.

of time."[112] Perhaps the clearest rendition of seeking after a Jesus within comes in the "Hymn of the Pearl" (also known as the "Hymn of the Soul"), which is preserved within the narrative as a song that Thomas sings while in prison.[113] Purportedly a metaphorical tale about Jesus, it links to those other ideas about the soul within each human, which came from above and which seeks to reunite with its true identity as God, if only provided with the correct path, as it tells of one who

> remembered forthwith that I was a son of kings,
> and my freedom yearned (sought) after its kind.
> I remembered also the pearl for the which I was
> sent down into Egypt
> and I began (or came) with charms against the
> terrible serpent,
> and I overcame him (or put him to sleep) by
> naming the name of my Father upon him,
> And I caught away the pearl and turned back to
> bear it unto my fathers.
> And I stripped off the filthy garment [that is, the
> body] and left it in their land,
> and directed my way forthwith to the light of my
> fatherland in the East.[114]

If we were to take these three examples of Thomasine narratives alone, we could say that the written tradition handed down to us from Edessa about Thomas and his version of Christianity is one that is highly ascetic in nature and that is particularly focused on celibacy.[115]

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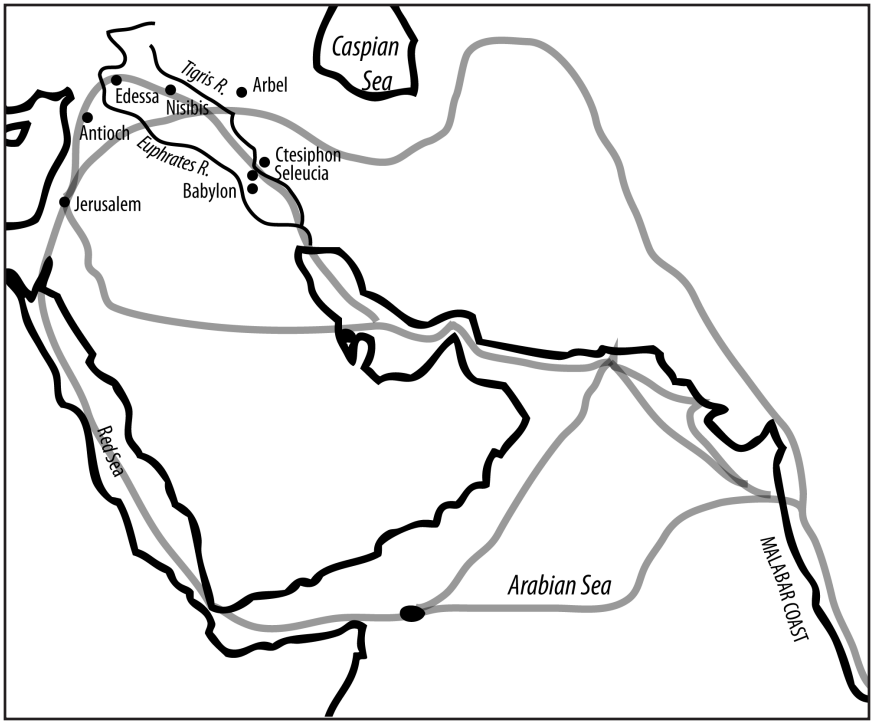
112. *Acts of Thomas*, sec. 124; Strain, "This I Say Not," 35.

113. *Acts of Thomas*, sec. 108; Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, 214–215.

114. *Acts of Thomas*, sec. 108.56–63.

115. Philip, *East of the Euphrates*, chap. 1; Barnard, "Origins and Emergence," 163, 168, 174–175; Strain, "This I Say Not," 17, 24, 31.



Possible routes of the apostle Thomas's journeys

Map based on trade routes presented in Samuel Hugh Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia*, vol. 1: *Beginnings to 1500* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1998), xviii–xix; and Janny Y. Strain, "'This I Say Not as One Doubting': Traditions of the Apostle Thomas from the Beginning of the Common Era through 800 CE," Honors Projects 22, Illinois Wesleyan University, 2013, 6, https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/religion_honproj/22.

Indian oral traditions tell of a different Thomas. That Thomas is martyred not as a result of commitment to advocating celibacy but for refusing to worship a Hindu god.[116] Indeed, traditions among Indian Thomasine Christians exhibit little of the obsession with celibacy so typical of the written accounts of Christianity in India coming out

116. Strain, "This I Say Not," 48; Moffett, *History of Christianity in Asia*, 34.

of northern Mesopotamia during the first centuries after Jesus's ministry.[117] Unfortunately, knowledge about early Christianity in India, especially as it relates to Thomas, from the point of view of the local peoples is very limited insofar as few written records exist. One tradition notes that Thomas came by sea to South India, established seven or eight churches, and continued on to China, before returning to India and martyrdom.[118] Although other Indian traditions, in the same manner as the *Acts of Thomas*, preserve a belief wherein Thomas came to North India, it's possible he made two trips, one by land and one by sea.[119] And it's also possible that the northern Indian tradition may be the reason for the claim that he visited Parthia, for the area would have been on Parthia's eastern border.[120] The early traditions of the Thomasine Christians in India are preserved only in accounts that were handed down orally unfortunately, whatever written records the church may have had having been destroyed as a result of the Synod of Diamper in 1599, after the Portuguese began their colonization of the subcontinent.[121] The arrival of the Portuguese is emblematic of the difference in faith between regions, for knowledge of the Roman see in India was very limited at the time, "where the influence of Roman law and the Roman Catholic Church was negligible and anti-Semitism was absent."[122] Indeed, the very asso-

117. Strain, "This I Say Not," 24, 38.

118. Strain, 45–46.

119. Moffett, *History of Christianity in Asia*, 33, 36; Gordon E. Christo, *The History of the Seventh-Day Sabbath in India until the Arrival of Seventh-Day Adventists* (Silver Spring, Md.: Biblical Research Institute, 2020), 9.

120. Moffett, *History of Christianity in Asia*, 33, 36.

121. Christo, *History of the Seventh-Day Sabbath*, 2.

122. Christo, 11. Earlier missionary trips to India, in the fourth century and the fourteenth century, also present a church that traced its origins "back to the apostle Thomas" but that was "badly divided by false teachings." Moffett, *History of Christianity in Asia*, 266. The

ciation of Jewish people with Christians is claimed to be one of the reasons "for the introduction of the Inquisition in Goa," as Sabbath keeping among some Christians may have continued well into the 1500s.[123] Such would not have necessarily set Christianity in India off from other Christianity in the East, which also maintained Sabbath keeping long after the West had discontinued it;[124] however, the very attestation that some kept the Sabbath shows that multiple versions of Christianity remained centuries after Rome had established its dominance.

Taken together, then, what we find is a portrait of Thomas that differs by region and by Christian sect, each entity authorizing a historical basis for its own set of beliefs, beliefs in part having origins in the milieu from which those sects emerged. So while scholars can largely agree that Christianity likely began among Jewish travelers and may have been furthered by traveling preachers, that is, by apostles sent from Jerusalem, as that message spread and time passed, individual traditions laid hold on whatever was taught and transformed it into something

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fourteenth-century visit of the Catholic priest Jordanus resulted in schism. Moffett, 500.

123. Christo, *History of the Seventh-Day Sabbath*, 12, 13, 14.

124. References to the need to keep the Sabbath appear in the *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, which, as noted in the Antioch chapter, is often thought to have been compiled in the late fourth century in Syria and is based in large part on the earlier third-century Syrian *Didascalia Apostolorum* (*The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*). See, for example, *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, 2.4.36, 2.7.59, 5.3.15, 7.2.23, and 8.4.33. For time and place of authorship, see James Donaldson, "Introductory Notice to *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*," in *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, ed. James Donaldson, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 7: *Fathers of the Third and Fourth Centuries: Lactantius, Venantius, Asterius, Victorinus, Dionysisus, Apostolic Teaching and Constitutions, Homily and Liturgies*, ed. Philip Schaff (1885), Christian Ethereal Library, https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf07/anf07.ix.i.html. *The Gospel of Thomas* also enjoins the Sabbath: "If you do not observe the Sabbath as a Sabbath, you will not see the father" (saying 27).

befitting the local community. The destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 CE, and the corresponding loss of the centralizing influence of the Jerusalem church, along with the interactions between Parthia and Rome, would have been pivotal to this process and likely has much to do with our loss of knowledge regarding the earliest Christian believers in Babylon and in the East more generally.

Babylonian, Persian, and Jewish Religious Traditions

Religious traditions in Babylon, leading into the Christian era, would have been a mix of ancient Babylonian cultic practices, Persian Zoroastrianism, and Jewish thought and behavior, each of which could well have been a source of ascetic leanings and other common beliefs of many of the early Eastern Christians. Most of the ancient non-Jewish faiths of the Mesopotamian region would have revolved around astrology and the worship of the ancestral idols that generally found a place within each family's home.[125] Two gods associated with Edessa in particular had origins within Babylon: Bel and Nebo, both of which are mentioned in *The Doctrine of Addai* as gods of the city.[126] The god Nebo's association with Babylon is reflected in the name of the city's great ruler Nebuchadnezzar, and the god Bel in the Babylonian name given to the biblical prophet Daniel—Belteshazzar.[127] Such gods were not necessarily identical throughout the Near East but rather likely reflected local traditions as they mixed with those of the Babylonians.[128] Worship of the heavenly bodies, most especially

125. Rawlinson, *Parthia*, 394–395.

126. John F. Healey, "The Pre-Christian Religions of the Syriac-Speaking Regions," chap. 3 in King, *Syriac World*, 51–52.

127. *Doctrine of Addai*, n45.

128. Healey, "Pre-Christian Religions," 52.

the sun (under the Arian name Mithra) and the moon, was also common throughout the Parthian Empire, including at Edessa, as is also noted in *The Doctrine of Addai*.[129] The worship of the sun and moon in turn would become associated with the worship of certain Eastern kings, thus linking governmental entities to the gods, either as caretakers for those gods or as actually divine in themselves.[130] Also of import in the region would have been the worship of the heavenly twins, another possible reflection of the reverence for the sun and moon.[131] Twin worship may well have played a role in the particular reverence for Thomas, given the meaning of his name.[132] As such, Thomas came to stand in as Jesus's twin, the one mortal and the other immortal, in such works as those earlier discussed.[133] Likewise, links to asceticism in early Eastern Christianity might be a reflection of cults like that of Atargatis, popular in Edessa, who demanded self-emasculation as an ultimate act of devotion, or of certain ascetic-leaning Buddhist sects that had penetrated into eastern Persia.[134]

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129. Rawlinson, *Parthia*, 394, 396; Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, 17.

130. Rawlinson, *Parthia*, 85, 394; Lily Ross Taylor, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor* (Middleton, Conn.: American Philological Association, 1931), 1–2; James W. Ermatinger, *Daily Life in the New Testament* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2008), 14–15; Shirley Jackson Case, "The Nature of Primitive Christianity," *American Journal of Theology* 17, no. 1 (Jan. 1913): 70, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3154794.

131. Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, 17, 197–198.

132. Burkitt, 197.

133. Burkitt, 198.

134. Healey, "Pre-Christian Religions," 63; Philip, *East of the Euphrates*, chap. 2. Mention of self-castration in Edessa in honor of the goddess Tharatha is among the second-century Syrian convert Bardesanes's assertions in *The Book of the Laws of Various Countries*, trans. B. P. Pratten, from *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 8, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, N.Y.: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886), revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0862.htm.

Although Zoroastrianism had a much stronger hold in Persian regions of the Parthian Empire than in Mesopotamian regions, some early Eastern Christians may have found parallels between its dualistic views of good and evil and those of the new faith.[135] While Christian and many Jewish believers posited the existence of a single creator and a set of angelic beings on the side of good and a set of demonic beings, headed by the fallen archangel Satan, on the side of evil, Zoroastrians posited that there were two coequal spirits at war with one another over the final state of man.[136] The good spirit, the creator of man, would eventually prevail, and all people would be resurrected and a righteous kingdom established, ideas that also would have resonated with many first-century Christians and Jews.[137] Although Zoroastrianism favored "a normal and wholesome enjoyment of life" and discouraged asceticism,[138] some early Christians, under the sway of Platonic ideas about the supremacy of spirit over matter that had permeated Persia during the Greek domination of the region, would come to identify the forces of evil with the creator of the physical world rather than with one who stood against that creator. As such, such thinkers, most often identified today as Gnostics, would posit that there was in fact a supreme god not directly related to the creation and an inferior god who had bound humans to the physical realm. While such an outlook was still a dualistic view of the universe, it contradicted Zoroastrian teachings and favored ascetic tendencies insofar as ridding one's self of physical accoutrements contributed to one's realignment with the better, supreme god.

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135. Rawlinson, *Parthia*, 394.

136. A. V. Williams, "Zoroastranism and the Resemblances between It and Christianity," *Biblical World* 27, no. 5 (May 1906): 336–339.

137. Williams, 336–337.

138. Williams, 342.

Some Jewish sects exhibited ascetic tendencies also and may well have been another source of such views among many of the early Christians of the East. Most notable among these would have been the Essenes. Although the sect disappeared from the Dead Sea region, the area with which they are most associated, at the time of the Jerusalem temple's destruction, they are thought "to have gone to Damascus and Antioch," though doubtless others scattered to additional parts of the world.[139] Some scholars, for example, identify the Egyptian Therapeutae, described by first-century Jewish thinker Philo, as a branch of the Essenes;[140] regardless of their origin, the Therapeutae's similarly ascetic devotion demonstrates the rather widespread dissemination of ascetic views throughout the Jewish diaspora in the first century, well before the temple's destruction. The Therapeutae, Philo notes, were so devoted to God and their coming afterlife that they left "their possessions to their sons or daughters, or perhaps to other relations, giving them up their inheritance with willing cheerfulness; and those who [knew] no relations [gave] their property to their companions or friends, for it followed of necessity that those who [had] acquired the wealth which sees, as if ready prepared for them, should be willing to surrender that wealth which [was] blind to those who themselves also [were] still blind in their minds."[141] While individual Therapeutae adherents lived a monastic existence in separate cells, the broader Essene sect lived within communities.[142] In other ways, however, the broader Essene movement exhibited similar tendencies. The ancient Jew-

139. Christo, *History of the Seventh-Day Sabbath*, 5–6.

140. Kaufmann Kohler, "Therapeutae," *Jewish Encyclopedia*, https://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/14366-therapeutae.

141. Philo, *On the Contemplative Life or Suppliants*, trans. Charles Duke Yonge (London: H. G. Bohn, 1854–1890), 2.13, Early Christian Writings, http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/yonge/book34.html.

142. Kohler, "Therapeutae."

ish historian Josephus, in his description of the sect, noted that they held "all things in common; so that a rich man enjoy[ed] no more of his own wealth than he who [had] nothing at all."[143] Philo noted that when Essenes "received their wages" they gave "them up to one person who [was] appointed as the universal steward and general manager; and he, when he ha[d] received the money, immediately [went] and purchase[d] what [was] necessary and furnishe[d] them with food in abundance."[144] In such behavior, the Essenes would not have differed much from the earliest Jerusalem church, which "was of one heart and one soul: neither said any *of them* that ought of the thing which he possessed was his own; but they had all things in common" (Acts 4:32), such that "as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need" (Acts 4:34–35). Since Mesopotamians and other Jews from the East were among the earliest converts in Jerusalem, it may well be that when they scattered back to their homelands, they took such practices with them, contributing to the eventual ascetic dynamic among many early Eastern Christians.

The ascetic tendencies among such Jews, however, went far beyond simply sharing property. As Josephus notes, they "reject[ed] pleasures as an evil, but esteem[ed] continence, and the conquest over our passions, to be virtue."[145] This, in turn, meant that "they neglect[ed] wedlock, but

143. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.1.5, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2848/2848-h/2848-h.htm#link182HCH0001.

144. Philo, *Hypothetica*, trans. Charles Duke Yonge (London: H. G. Bohn, 1854–1890), 11.10, Early Christian Writings, http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/yonge/book37.html.

145. Flavius Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews; or History of the Destruction of Jerusalem*, trans. William Whiston, 2.8.2, Project Gutenberg, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2850/2850-h/2850-h.htm#link22HCH0008.

[chose] out other persons children, while they [were] pliable, and fit for learning, and esteem[ed] them to be of their kindred, and form[ed] them according to their own manners."[146] Philo likewise noted that "they repudiate[d] marriage; and at the same time they practice[d] continence in an eminent degree; for no one of the Essenes ever marrie[d] a wife."[147] In Philo's account, most Essenes were old men, and children were not allowed to join the sect.[148] Either way, both writers acknowledged the sect's commitment to celibacy, another common trait among various Eastern Christian sects.

One didn't necessarily need to be an Essene Jew to appreciate such a lifestyle, however. Philo makes clear that he found the Essene ways an "enviable system of life."[149] In discussing the Therapeutae he'd write similarly: "I myself admire the men who thus showed themselves superior to the attractions of money. . . . How much better and more admirable are they who, without having any inferior eagerness for the attainment of philosophy, have nevertheless preferred magnanimity to carelessness, and, giving presents from their possessions instead of destroying them, so as to be able to benefit others and themselves also, have made others happy by imparting to them of the abundance of their wealth, and themselves by the study of philosophy?"[150] As a diaspora Jew, Philo found asceticism to be an admirable trait that placed one next to God. As he notes in *On the Giants*, the best men are those whose "souls . . . have been taught some kind of sublime philosophy, meditating, from beginning to end, on dying as to the life of the body, in order to obtain an inheritance of the incorporeal and imperishable life, which is to be enjoyed

146. Josephus, 2.8.2.
147. Philo, *Hypothetica*, 11.14.
148. Philo, 11.3.
149. Philo, 11.18.
150. Philo, *On the Contemplative Life*, 2.14, 2.16.

in the presence of the uncreate and everlasting God."[151] As the historian Emily J. Hunt notes, "Philo also has a very strong asceticism, which at times seems to be world denying. He gives a rather negative appraisal of the body, calling it a tomb and a corpse. Yet Philo does not hold the body and the world to be entirely negative. . . . He understands intercourse for the purposes of procreation to be a good thing, a participation in God's creativity, although he is nonetheless scathing of physical pleasures."[152]

Clearly, some Jewish thinkers admired ascetic principles, even though they were not part of an asceticism-espousing cult. That, of course, doesn't prove that ascetic tendencies within early Eastern Christianity necessarily derived from Jewish custom. Many diaspora Jews adopted certain local mannerisms to better fit in with the surrounding culture, be they ascetic or other. In a study of Jewish naming conventions in two cities during the early portion of the Babylonian captivity, for example, Yigal Bloch shows how Jewish exiles who served as merchants, from the second generation on, often took on Babylonian names to better fit in with their customer base. Although those who served in the royal administration might have kept their Hebrew names, demonstrating a relative cultural tolerance among the ruling class, the adoption of Babylonian names among the merchant class, Bloch notes, "seems likely to reflect assimilation into the native Babylonian society, fostered by the necessity to pursue commercial dealings with the Ebabbar temple of Šamaš and the social circles centered around the temple, which consisted of conservatively minded upper strata of the native

151. Philo, *On the Giants*, trans. Charles Duke Yonge (London: H. G. Bohn, 1854–1890), 3.14, Early Christian Writings, http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/yonge/book9.html.

152. Emily J. Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century: The Case of Tatian* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 115.

Babylonian society."[153] Such assimilation no doubt would have had an impact on the values and beliefs certain diaspora Jews espoused, even if they did not fully give up their own culture, a trend well observed among Hellenistically minded Jewish thinkers of later generations, like Philo, Aristobulus, and Artapanus, who tried to meld Jewish and Greek thinking.[154]

As such, Jewish thought at the time varied widely, not only across the world but within individual regions; Christianity, as a subset of that thought, would have also reflected these varying ideas—and even more so as it began to pull away from the wider Jewish culture. Ascetic, Greek-minded, or Babylonian-oriented Jews wouldn't have been the only Jewish influence among early Christians in the region. Purity-minded Pharisaical sects, from which rabbinical Judaism would eventually emerge,[155] likely made some inroads into Jewish thought in the region as well and would have had an equally profound effect on the early Christian church in the East as both rabbinical Judaism and Christianity took shape. Pilgrimages of Jewish people to Jerusalem, correspondence between Jerusalem and the diaspora community, the collection of temple funds, and the setting of the sacred calendar all meant that Jewish sects within Palestine maintained some degree of connection with and

153. Yigal Bloch, "Judeans in Sippar and Susa during the First Century of the Babylonian Exile: Assimilation and Perseverance under Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Rule," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern History* 1, no. 2 (2014): 119. For a broader discussion on the subject, see, among others, Martin Hengel's *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974).

154. Marian Hillar, *From Logos to Trinity: The Evolution of Religious Beliefs from Pythagoras to Tertullian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 41.

155. For more on this common claim, see Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 154, 226–227.

influence over those who lived in areas such as Babylon, and the Pharisees, who had a strong voice in the Great Sanhedrin and who believed that "their interpretation of the Torah ought be authoritative everywhere," were likely no exception.[156] That their influence was muffled outside Palestine in the early first century, however, is likely, as both the promulgation of a wide variety of sects and the fact that the Pharisees were still trying to put their definitive stamp on the Jewish religion even within Palestine would have prevented them from being the sole, or even foremost, voice among the peoples scattered in other regions.[157] Indeed, as Jacob Neusner notes, we know of only two Pharisaic authorities who resided in Parthia before the temple's destruction.[158]

That the Pharisees had *some* influence, however, seems almost certain, given the situations described in the book

156. Neusner, *History of the Jews*, 42.

157. Neusner, 42; Neusner, "Babylonia"; Heszer, "Crossing Enemy Lines." Although Neusner believes Pharisaic influence preceded the Jerusalem temple's destruction, he concedes that it was likely minimal. Heszer is skeptical also of Pharisaic influence, even well into the second century, claiming that although "rabbinic networks seem to have developed in Roman Palestine already from the late first century C.E. onwards," for the expansion of such networks to areas outside Palestine to occur, the "rabbinic movement had to be firmly established in its own territory, a process which seems to have reached a certain completion at the end of the second and beginning of the third century." Heszer, 225. Indeed, Philip S. Alexander, notes that "there are no good grounds for believing that the group of rabbis who gathered at Yavneh to begin a reconstruction of Judaism in the aftermath of the fall of the temple in 70 C.E. represented anything more than a sect or party within Judaism. They may have been well organised, and ably led by respected scholars, but they were only one of a number of sects or parties within Palestinian Judaism at the time, and in no sense can they be regarded as at this stage representing Jewish orthodoxy." Philip S. Alexander, "Jewish Believers in Early Rabbinic Literature (2d to 5th Centuries)," chapter 21 in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, ed. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 665–666.

158. Neusner, "Babylonia."

of Acts and in Paul's letters. Mention of the Pharisees in Acts occurs mostly when Paul is in Jerusalem. However, controversy over circumcision and adherence to the oral law pervades the book and some of Paul's letters, even in regions outside Judea. Before his conversion, Paul, himself a Pharisee (Acts 23:6, 26:5; Philip. 3:5), with the blessing of the high priest, headed to the synagogues of Damascus, in Syria, north of Galilee, to bring any who professed Jesus "bound unto Jerusalem" (Acts 9:2). Although concerns about circumcision would not have been limited entirely to the Pharisees, the uniquely ritualized Jewish version of circumcision would have been of particular importance to them,[159] and Acts 15 notes that it was specifically the Pharisees (Acts 15:5), come from Judea (Acts 15:1), who tried to force circumcision and the Mosaic oral law on Gentile believers in Antioch of Syria, as explored in the previous chapter. Concerns with circumcision and adherence to the ritualistic oral purity laws seem to be at the center of much of the discussion in Paul's letter to the Galatians as well, showing that such Jewish Pharisaic traditions had spread beyond Judea, into Asia Minor, even in Paul's time—and were also helping to shape Christian practices, as Paul makes clear when he writes of certain "false brethren unawares brought in" (Gal. 2:4) to the Christian assembly. Indeed, Jewish objections in Acts to Paul's message are eventually raised in most cities he visits, and the reason given is often over his persuading "men to worship God contrary to the law" (Acts 18:13), as was the complaint in Corinth. If such objections could be raised among the diaspora in areas far to the west of Jerusalem, it seems likely that similar objections would have been raised among the diaspora in areas to the east as well. That is not to say that Pharisaic power pervaded everywhere, as is made clear when Paul eventually reached Rome and found that the

159. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 274–275.

Jewish community there "neither received letters out of Judaea concerning [him], neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spake any harm of [him]" (Acts 28:21), but the influence, as one among many Jewish voices, and a considerable one at that, certainly seems to be the case.

Roman Power and the Spread of Pharisaical Judaism

Pharisaical influence among the Jewish people would grow after the Roman destruction of the Jewish temple and even more so after the Roman overthrow of Jerusalem. Indeed, one can read the development of Christianity within the Babylonian region as one that is substantially tied to the interaction between the Roman and Parthian Empires and the Jewish relationships with each. As the conduit through which goods such as silk and spice traveled from China, India, and Persia to Rome, Mesopotamia was a region Rome had considerable interest in controlling and a region over which Parthia had an equal interest in maintaining its domination.[160] Rulership over the region was the occasion for numerous wars between the two kingdoms.[161] The Roman governor of Syria Marcus Licinius Crassus in 53 BCE and the Roman general Mark Antony in 36 BCE made the first two Roman attempts to invade the territory. Their defeats kept Rome at bay for the next hundred-plus years, until the Emperor Trajan made his own attempt in 114 CE. Parthia even managed to invade Judea for a short time around 40 BCE and install its own ruler and high priest before Mark Antony's counterattack.

160. Thomas, "Conversions of Adiabene and Edessa," 21.

161. Michael Thomas provides a very good short synopsis of these conflicts. Thomas, "Conversions of Adiabene and Edessa," 21–23. For a more extended discussion, see George Rawlinson's book *Parthia*, particularly chapters 10–21.

The spread of Christianity in the East, thus, if it began in the first century CE, as legends about the apostles would have it, would have begun during a period of relative peace between the two kingdoms. All was not peaceful in Judea during this period, however. Rome's war with the Jews within that territory and its destruction of the temple in 70 CE would have scattered many Jewish people from the Holy Land to regions far and wide, and the kingdom of Parthia, with its tolerance not only for the Jewish people but also for differing religions, as well as its antipathy for Rome itself (their enemy is our friend), would have been a welcome center for relocation.[162] With the refugees would have come many with ties to both the Pharisaic and Christian sects.[163] A competition for followers between the two that we see playing out in much of the New Testament, written at least partially during the same period, between 40 and 110 CE, ensued. If the Pharisees had less influence in these far-flung regions early on, Christian teachings, insofar as they reached such lands, would have had more opportunity to develop within the Jewish community and would also have shown more affinity with other Jewish sectarian beliefs, such as Essenism, which itself would have spread with the temple's destruction.[164] Likewise, where Pharisaical influence had already well developed within local synagogues, Christian missionary activity would have been less welcome and likely less successful or would have been more heavily tinged with adherence to the Jewish oral law. The flight of Jewish people from the Holy Land would have brought an intensification of the influence of each sect where it was already established, as more people of the same way of thought

162. Neusner, *History of the Jews*, 55–56; Heszer, "Crossing Enemy Lines," 228; Wigram, *Introduction to the History*, 31; Rawlinson, *Parthia*, 419.

163. Thomas, "Conversions of Adiabene and Edessa," 18.

164. Christo, *History of the Seventh-Day Sabbath*, 6.

moved into a given community, or, conversely, increasing clashes between groups as people moved into areas where one or another sect had previously been more dominant. Indeed, the early twentieth-century historian F. Crawford Burkitt, who wrote extensively on the church of the East, claims the impact of the temple's destruction and the concomitant Jewish War was so great that it "finally separated the Church and the Synagogue . . . and with it perished the primitive Semitic Christianity."[165]

Just as the followers of Jesus had apostles, so too did the Pharisees have similar counterparts. With fewer Jewish people traveling to Jerusalem for the festivals and temple sacrifice, and thus with less opportunity to offer indoctrination into the teachings of the local sages, the sages would have increasingly gone to the Jewish people in the diaspora. "These apostles may have had political missions," Jacob Neusner writes of rabbinic sages from the Levant visiting Babylon, "but they most certainly had spiritual missions, giving sermons in synagogues, deciding matters of law according to the viewpoint of the Tannaim [rabbinic sages], representing the authority of the patriarchate wherever they were. They also collected funds for the Palestinian academies, presumably in place (in part) of the former gifts to the Temple, communicated edicts on intercalation of the calendar, conducted polemics against Christianity, and occasionally worked miracles."[166] Indeed, after 70 CE,

165. F. Crawford Burkitt, *Christianity outside the Roman Empire* (New York: Macmillan, 1899), 5. Another possibility, proposed by Samuel Hugh Moffett, is that Christianity didn't arrive in the East until after the temple's destruction, with Christian pilgrims, unable to return from their flight to Pella, moving eastward, along the trade routes to Edessa. Moffett, *History of Christianity in Asia*, 51. I find this late date rather unlikely, given the way that the Christian message spread so widely within the Roman Empire, including among the Jewish people, well before 70 CE.

166. Neusner, *History of the Jews*, 43. Heszer disputes this, claiming that while Babylonian scholars would have traveled to Palestine

as Catherine Heszer puts it, "the Torah became the main religious heritage and Torah study the foremost religious activity held up by rabbis. Shared Torah study and interpretation would replace the former link to the 'homeland' through pilgrimage to the Jerusalem Temple."[167] In other words, the law, as interpreted by the sages, replaced the temple as the center of Jewish identity.

The Roman emperor Trajan's invasion of Mesopotamia in 114 CE, while initially successful, would be short lived. Trajan managed to conquer the area by choosing not to cross the Euphrates, as Crassus and Mark Anthony had learned the hard way served as a formidable barrier to invasion, but rather to circle around the river to the north, through Armenia.[168] From there, he was able to descend into southern Mesopotamia, all the way to Babylon.[169] His gains would not last, however, as the conquered peoples, feigning submission, would rebel against his holding force soon after the main body of his legions moved on.[170]

His invasion, however, may have had an impact in Arbel. Jacob Neusner posits that the royal family of Adiabene, which had converted to the Jewish faith at the same time as Izates in the mid-first century, fled the city for Armenia at the time of Trajan's invasion.[171] He comes to this conclusion by noting that "a family of Jewish origin" is said to have come from "the eastern country of the Arik. The family was descended from 'a certain Manue,'" a name that is a form of the Monobazes, which was in fact the name of

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for learning, Palestinian sages would have gone to Babylon only for practical reasons, not religious ones, though in doing so, they still would have spread their teachings. Heszer, "Crossing Enemy Lines," 234.

167. Heszer, "Crossing Enemy Lines," 236.
168. Thomas, "Conversions of Adiabene and Edessa," 22.
169. Rawlinson, *Parthia*, 309.
170. Rawlinson, 310.
171. Neusner, "Conversion of Adiabene to Christianity," 145–146.

the ruling family of Adiabene.[172] No friends of Trajan, having "imprisoned his emissary" and then lost power when Trajan conquered the land, the family had apparently fled first to Hamadan, directly east of Adiabene, since it was the only nearby area not occupied by Rome; only after Trajan's withdrawal did they then proceed to Armenia rather than returning to Adiabene.[173] Neusner conjectures that this was because of "resentment of part of the nobility against the conversion of the monarchy to Judaism." A new monarchy then took the Monobazes dynasty's place.[174]

The Chronicle of Arbela notes that this was about the time that Christianity took hold of the city.[175] In the *Chronicle*, the first bishop of Arbel was Peqida, who had come to the faith from the ancient Persian religion through the work of Addai around the turn of the century and who had been sent out—and to Arbel—five years later.[176] His said time of death coincides roughly with Trajan's invasion.[177] According to the *Chronicle*, Christians continued in the city, but another bishop would not take Peqida's place for another six years.[178] This bishop, Semson, would be appointed by Mazra, bishop of Bet Zabdai, north of Adiabene, along the east coast of the Tigris River.[179] Semson's ministry would be short. Three years after his appointment, he would be martyred by followers of the local Persian religion, and after that, it would be another twelve years before another bishop would oversee the city's Christians.[180] Such gaps in the bishopric of the city were common during its first two hundred years, according to the *Chronicle*, with another

172. Neusner, 145, 146.
173. Neusner, 146.
174. Neusner, 146.
175. Neusner, 144.
176. *Chronicle of Arbela*, sec. 1.
177. *Chronicle of Arbela*, sec. 1.
178. *Chronicle of Arbela*, sec. 2.
179. *Chronicle of Arbela*, sec. 2.
180. *Chronicle of Arbela*, secs. 2–3.

occurring toward the end of the second century.[181] Persecution from locals of other faiths is the common reason provided, but one can postulate that the gaps might also represent different branches of Christian belief or changes in the authority to which the Christian believers submitted—in other words, a lack of true succession. If Peqida's death, for example, roughly paralleled the departure of the Jewish royal household in Arbel, it could well also represent a break with the Jewish foundation of the Christian movement in the city. As already noted, *The Acts of Mar Mari* makes much of Mari's visit to Arbel, where he converts many, including the royal household, but it does not explicitly claim him as the first to visit the city, and the royal household he converts is decidedly non-Jewish. "What is this that you are abolishing the gods and teaching about the one God?" the agitated king asks of Mari.[182] If there is any kernel of truth to that story, it may well constitute a different strain of Christianity.

The *Chronicle* itself was clearly written at a time after which the Roman church's authority had been largely accepted, with the third bishop of Arbel, Ishaq, being called "a Constantine of his time" because of his great influence in the region.[183] The western but more especially the northern origins of the bishops who come to Adiabene reflect not just the Palestinian roots of the faith but also areas over which the Roman Empire itself would have maintained a greater degree of control in later centuries, and the Christian faith itself is noted as being one that largely involved the conversion of non-Jewish Persians, who are described at one point as child sacrificers.[184] At the same time that the *Chronicle* makes little mention of conver-

181. *Chronicle of Arbela*, secs. 5–6.
182. *Acts of Mar Mari*, sec. 8.
183. *Chronicle of Arbela*, sec. 3.
184. *Chronicle of Arbela*, sec. 2.

sions among the Jewish diaspora, the Jewish advent of the early faith may be acknowledged in the fact that the fifth bishop, Noh (163–179 CE), is noted as the descendent of Jewish parents from Jerusalem who "were afraid of going back to their country because of the unending rebellion going [on] there."[185] After Noh, near the end of the second century, there is an acknowledged four-year gap in the bishopric, with many Christians returning "to the religion of Satan" (that is, ancient Persian faiths).[186] The seventh bishop, Ebed Mesiha, though born in Arbel, is said to have received his training in Antioch, more firmly establishing a connection of Adiabene Christianity to the later Western church.[187] This would have been at the end of the second century CE, which corresponds also with the church's apparent rapid expansion in the city—an expansion that may well have been recognized by historians only because it was more firmly tied to the traditional Western church.[188]

If there were Christians in or near Babylon proper during the time of Trajan's invasion and they were primarily Jewish, we can postulate that like the royal family of Adiabene, they may well have fled. For a short while, this would have left a primarily non-Jewish mission field. What Jewish people did return after Rome's withdrawal may well have been more inclined to follow the increasingly popular rabbinical form of Judaism. Christianity, as Jacob Neusner writes, appears to have "made very little progress among the Babylonian Jews at any time up to 226." Few Christians were to be found in nearby Seleucia-Ctesiphon until 270.[189] Neusner postulates that this is because the area was more strongly under the sway of the emerging rabbinical Juda-

185. *Chronicle of Arbela*, sec. 5.
186. *Chronicle of Arbela*, sec. 5.
187. *Chronicle of Arbela*, sec. 7.
188. *Chronicle of Arbela*, sec. 7; Neusner, *History of the Jews*, 168.
189. Neusner, *History of the Jews*, 168; Wigram, *Introduction to the History*, 49; *Chronicle of Arbela*, sec. 9.

ism. "Wherever Tannaite influence was strong among the local Jewish community," he writes, "as in Nisibis and Nehardea, there Christianity made slight progress, if any, for a very long period of time. Since the earliest converts in the east (as in the west) were Jews, it stands to reason that the Tannaim were able to oppose the Christian interpretation of Scriptures with great success, and to provide their own instead, wherever they possessed influence over local Jewry. . . . On the other hand, wherever Tannaite influence was weak among local Jewry, there Christianity made substantial progress."[190] If Jewish Christians largely abandoned the area, as both Roman and rabbinic influence asserted themselves more strongly after the temple's destruction, Trajan's invasion, and Jerusalem's downfall, what Christianity would be testified to in the later record would be that connected more closely with the non-Jewish community.

Trajan's gains in Mesopotamia did not last long. Three years after his invasion, his successor Hadrian forfeited the territory, and Rome remained confined to the western shores of the Euphrates for another fifty years, when the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius renewed the conflict using a route similar to that of Trajan, as noted in the previous chapter.[191] From this period on, Edessa and its parent state of Osroene largely looked to Rome rather than to Parthia for its defense.[192] Another Roman invasion followed in 195, under the emperor Septimus Severus, who again took Babylon but who was unable to hold it. However, after this, northwestern Mesopotamia was largely in the possession of the Romans, while southern and eastern Mesopotamia endured occasional Roman forays (one in 216 CE notably

190. Neusner, *History of the Jews*, 169. See also Neusner, "Conversion of Adiabene to Christianity," 148, 150.

191. Rawlinson, *Parthia*, 325–330; Moffett, *History of Christianity in Asia*, 57–58; Thomas, "Conversions of Adiabene and Edessa," 21–23.

192. Thomas, "Conversions of Adiabene and Edessa," 23.

involved the sacking of Arbel) but largely remained under control of the Parthians, until the empire itself collapsed with the rise of the Persian Sassanids in 226 CE. And probably not coincidentally, the period between Trajan's invasion of Edessa and Rome's final conquest of it at the start of third century was also when, as historian L. W. Barnard notes, "Christianity gained in strength in Edessa."[193] If Christianity was already present in Edessa from early on, however, Barnard's statement belies another fact: the strength Christianity gained was in the kinds of people who constituted Christian believers and in the degree to which that Christianity would fit the parameters of what would become known as orthodox Christianity, as eventually promulgated by Rome.

Already noted is the fact that most scholars believe that the Abgar mentioned in *The Doctrine of Addai* is not Abgar V but rather Abgar VIII. The latter's reign would have coincided with the establishment of Roman hegemony over the city, a period in which we also find Edessene Christianity starting to look west to Antioch for authority rather than to local or Eastern sources, any connection to apostolic Jewish authorities in Jerusalem having long ago been severed with that city's destruction and rebuilding in a non-Jewish image.[194] Thus, whether or not Addai was a first- or second-generation missionary from Palestine, the *Doctrine* would link the tradition and the local power structure embodied in the bishop Palut to the Antiochene bishop Serapion, and him in turn to Zephyrinus of Rome, despite the historical impossibility. Indeed, the Christianity represented in the authority of Palut was not the only Christianity present in Edessa at the end of the second century and may

193. Barnard, "Origins and Emergence," 162 (quote); Philip, *East of the Euphrates*, chap. 2; Moffett, *History of Christianity in Asia*, 46–47; Thomas, "Conversions of Adiabene and Edessa," 23.

194. Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, 35.

not have even been the most popular form, as F. Crawford Burkitt makes clear in his study of early Eastern Christianity.[195] "It is difficult to repress the suspicion that at first the Catholics, as we may call them, were in the minority," Burkitt notes.[196] He goes on to explain that the fourth-century Syriac Christian Ephrem once complained that the "orthodox" Christians were called "Palutians" and that the church "ought not be to called after any man's name, but only have Christ himself."[197] Since it is usually dissenting sects that take on the name of their founders, the obvious conclusion, Burkitt writes, "is that the Catholic Church in Edessa was a dissenting sect founded by Palut."[198]

The Doctrine of Addai and *The Acts of Mar Mari* aren't the only documents that attempt to tie the names of supposed early teachers of Christianity in the East to later teachers of Antiochene and Roman descent. The thirteenth-century Syriac text *The Book of the Bee*, for example, orders its succession list of teachers in the Eastern church as Addai, Mari, Abris, Abraham, James, Ahadabu, Shahlupha, and Papa.[199] From Abris forward, however, the bishop is noted as being "of the laying on of hands of Antioch" until a shift is made to Ctesiphon with Shahlupha.[200] Papa, of course, is the bishop *Acts* notes Mari as directly appointing. An Abraham similarly shows up as the fourth bishop of Arbel in the *Chronicle of Arbela*, though that Abraham is said to have been raised as a Christian from childhood, under the tutelage of Semson.[201]

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195. See also Barnard, "Origins and Emergence," 174.

196. Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, 28.

197. Burkitt, 28. See also David G. K. Taylor, "Coming of Christianity to Mesopotamia," 77.

198. Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, 28.

199. *The Book of the Bee: The Syriac Text, Edited from the Manuscripts in London, Oxford, and Munich*, trans. Ernest A. Wallis Budge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1886), 116.

200. *Book of the Bee*, 116.

201. *Chronicle of Arbela*, sec. 4.

The Abris, Abraham, and James noted in *The Book of the Bee* may actually have been descendants of the family of Jesus. *The Book* notes that Abraham "was descended from the family of Jacob the son of Joseph," while James "was also of the family of Joseph the husband of Mary."[202] Such names, of course, are generic enough that they need not be affiliated with *that* Joseph and Mary; however, the thirteenth-century Syrian bishop Bar Hebraeus's *Ecclesiastical Chronicle* is even more explicit.[203] It notes that after Mar Mari's death, the Antioch church ordained and sent Abris to the East, and that this Abris was of the family of Joseph the carpenter, father to Jesus and James.[204] The Eastern bishops Abraham and James (or Jacob) are also noted as being from the family of Jacob, the brother of the Lord Jesus.[205] Although most scholars see these claims as fictional, Richard Bauckham defends them as likely having an element of truth because "claims that particular individuals were descendants of the family of Jesus are extremely rare in Christian literature," and while "James" or "Jacob" is a common Jewish name, Abraham was much less frequently used and Abris even more uncommon.[206] "Only if the names were Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would we have been justified in suspecting them!" Bauckham writes.[207] Indeed, as

202. *Book of the Bee*, 116.

203. Dating from Romain Butin, "Bar Hebraeus," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 2 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907), http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02294a.htm.

204. Bar Hebraeus, *Ecclesiastical Chronicle*, part 2, vol. 3, chap. 5, https://syri.ac/bhchronicles#EC2page. The linked text is in Syriac and Latin; an English translation is available at the *Wikipedia* entry for "Abris," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abris.

205. Bar Hebraeus, *Ecclesiastical Chronicle*, 2.3.6–7; English translations at "Abraham of Kashkar," *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham_of_Kashkar, and "Yaqob I," *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yaqob_I.

206. Richard Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 69.

207. Bauckham, 69.

Bauckham notes, the Eastern tradition of Jesus's family serving in leadership positions is in line with that of the Jerusalem church, wherein James the brother of Jesus was of prominent authority, followed by his cousin Symeon.[208]

If any truth exists to this Eastern tradition—or even if none does—a whole new line of possible scenarios arises, each suggesting that the history of the churches of the East was deliberately linked at some point later to that of the church in Rome, via Edessa and Antioch, or to Arbela. First is the apparent church at Seleucia-Ctesiphon, which, after Mar Mari, otherwise had no significance until the bishop Shahlupha of Arbela sent Papa to preside over believers in the city in the late third century, according to *The Chronicle of Arbela*.[209] However, if the accounts in *The Book of the Bee* or of Bar Hebraeus are correct, there was likely a church with leadership intact long before Shahlupha's introduction of such governance. Abris, according to Bar Hebraeus, was buried at Seleucia (*The Book of the Bee* says his burial place was unknown); meanwhile, *The Book of the Bee* places James's grave in Ctesiphon, while Bar Hebraeus places it also at Seleucia.[210] In addition, both of the accounts tie the three men, Abris, Abraham, and James, either directly to Antioch or to Jerusalem. Abris, as noted earlier, is sent from Antioch after Mar Mari's death; Abraham is also ordained in Antioch, while James was ordained at Jerusalem according to Bar Hebraeus and at Antioch according to *The Book of the Bee*.[211] If Jerusalem, it should be noted, James, being ordained near the end of the second century, would have had hands laid on him by

208. Bauckham, 70.

209. *Chronicle of Arbela*, sec. 9; Moffett, *History of Christianity in Asia*, 120.

210. Bar Hebraeus, *Ecclesiastical Chronicle*, 2.3.5, 2.3.7; *Book of the Bee*, 116.

211. Bar Hebraeus, *Ecclesiastical Chronicle*, 2.3.5–7; *Book of the Bee*, 116.

non-Jewish Christians, since by that time, Jews had been banned from the city.[212] Like Abris and Abraham, Ahadabu was also ordained at Antioch, while Shahlupha, ordained in the East, served, according to Bar Hebraeus, in Seleucia twenty years, not Arbela.[213]

Hence, we find accounts such as *The Acts of Mar Mari* completely skipping those who had direct ancestry to Jesus and ties to Antioch and Jerusalem, in favor of a local whose origins went back to Edessa. Meanwhile, *The Chronicle of Arbela* claims there was no significant church in Seleucia-Ctesiphon until Arbela's own Shahlupha ordained Papa. Conversely, the thirteenth-century Syriac writers suggest that not only was there a church in Seleucia-Ctesiphon but it was linked to Antioch, which was itself linked to Jerusalem, rather than to Rome as *The Doctrine of Addai* would claim of the church in Edessa after the death of Aggai. Such later Syrian writers perhaps wished to claim a separate non-Roman tradition by creating, or reestablishing, a tie to Jesus's family and other earlier established church congregations. Each account is, thus, laying out a particular agenda and argument for primacy, with several seemingly eliding much of what would have been the Jewish line of descent from the origins of the church, except as it is convenient to lay claim to it. In this sense, Jacob Neusner could be wrong, insofar as Christianity—especially one in a more heavily Jewish form—may well have grown up alongside the rabbinical Judaism then developing in lower Mesopotamia. Indeed, it may be as Richard Bauckham suggests, that "the large Jewish diaspora in Mesopotamia and the close links between it and Palestinian Jews means that there is nothing improbable in the idea

212. See the lists and explanations of Eusebius in his *Church History*, 4.5.2–3, 5.12.1–2.

213. Bar Hebraeus, *Ecclesiastical Chronicle*, 2.3.8–9; *Book of the Bee*, 116.

that some[,] . . . in the late first or early second century, should have travelled there as missionaries and remained as church leaders. They would presumably have reached Ctesiphon-Seleucia quite independent of Mari's mission in Edessa."[214] If so, it's possible that many of the apostles, as per the surviving legends, and perhaps even Peter himself, tracked through the area, founding a church that was then lost or superseded by that headed by Papa (or for that matter, Palut) a couple of hundred years later.

Just as many of these early documents attempted to tie the names of the earliest Christian teachers in the area to the later succession stemming from Rome and/or Antioch, so too did they attempt to tie early followers less to the common people, particularly of Jewish descent, and more to noble households of non-Jewish descent. Thus *The Doctrine of Addai*, as previously noted, transfers the conversion of the upper classes from late second-century Roman times to the early first century and adopts traditions from Adiabene's conversion to the Jewish faith more than one hundred years earlier to its own story. Likewise, *The Acts of Mar Mari* sends Mari to king after king on his missionary journeys, as does *The Acts of Thomas* with its famous apostle. Even Bar Hebraeus's *Ecclesiastical Chronicle* records an event in which Abraham heals the Persian king's son.[215] What is clear is that there was a concerted effort among some in later years to downplay the Jewish origins of the faith in order to emphasize that faith's tie to the later orthodox power structures of the Roman church, even as that church held lesser sway in the East as a whole than it did elsewhere.[216] By the Middle Ages, by which time Rome

214. Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives*, 70.

215. Bar Hebraeus, *Ecclesiastical Chronicle*, 2.3.6.

216. Thomas, "Conversions of Adiabene and Edessa," provides an extended discussion of this phenomenon, largely by claiming that Adiabene likely preceded Edessa as a Christian enclave and showing how differences between the tale provided in *The Doctrine of Addai* and

Bishops of Edessa, Arbel, and the East to circa 225 CE

Edessa		
Per *Doctrine of Addai*	**Per *Book of the Bee*, chap. 48**	**Per Michael the Syrian's Chronicle**
Addai/Thaddeus	Addai	Addai
Aggai	Aggai	Aggai
Palut	Taddai/ Thaddaeus	Palut
		Abshelama
		Barsamya
		Tiridat
		Bozin
		Shalula
		Guria
		Izani
		Hystasp
		Aqai

According to *The Doctrine of Addai*, Addai ordained Aggai as his replacement; Palut was a deacon ordained as an elder at the end of Addai's life, who was later ordained bishop by Serapion of Antioch. *Book of the Bee* lists Aggai as Addai's disciple. In chapter 49 of the same, Addai, Aggai, and Mar Mari are listed as among the twelve who replaced twelve of the seventy sent out (Luke 10:1) who were rejected for accepting the teachings of Cerinthus, a late first-century docetist.

Arbel
Per *Chronicle of Arbela*
Peqida
Semson
Ishaq
Abraham
Noh
Habel

The Chronicle notes that Addai ordained Peqida. By contrast, *The Acts of Mar Mari* notes that Mar Mari, after his appointment by Addai, founded the church in Arbel; Mar Mari, on his death, ordained Papa as the bishop of the churches of the East.

Of the East
Per *Book of the Bee*, chap. 51
Addai
Mari
Abris
Abraham
James
Ahadabu
Shahlupha
Papa

and the East had split, Eastern writers moved toward emphasizing the faith's local succession lines to the earliest centers of the faith.

That there were numerous versions of Christianity spreading in Mesopotamia during the second century is well evident. Not only were there the so-called Palutians; there were also adherents to an earlier Jewish strain of Christianity and followers of such men as Marcion, Bardesanes, and Tatian, each of whom would eventually be dismissed as heretics.

The Continuing Influence of Jewish Christian Traditions

That Jewish customs persisted as a significant strain of Eastern Christianity longer than they did in the West there is no doubt, as evidenced in the earlier discussion of Thomasine Christianity. Support for the continuing presence of Jewish Christians can be found in an inscription "erected by the [third-century] Zoroastrian Grand Inquisitor Kartir: 'I banned from the empire and destroyed: Jews, Shamans, Brahmans, Nazorees, Christians, and Maktaks were crushed in the Empire.'"[217] The inscription, in other words, points to two forms of Christianity—Nazarenes, of Jewish Christian heritage and practice, and Christians, of the non-Jewish heritage and practice, with the latter likely falling under the supervision of the Roman church through Antioch.[218] Even so, Jewish practices continued to influence Eastern Christianity as a whole as well, even as it transitioned away from Jewish custom.

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that provided in Eusebius's earlier account of the conversion of Edessa demonstrate an increasing degree antisemitism.

217. Thomas, "Conversions of Adiabene and Edessa," 24.

218. Thomas, 24.

The fourth-century *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, thought to be a compilation, created in Syria, of earlier materials,[219] as noted in the previous chapter, testifies to a mix of Jewish traditions with new Christian ones, as well as the ceasing of various Jewish ordinances. Primarily a manual of church practices, the *Constitutions* preserves evidence that much of the Eastern Church continued to observe the Sabbath, alongside meeting on Sunday, as well as possibly the Jewish Passover. With regard to the Sabbath, parishioners are told, more than once, "Thou shalt observe the Sabbath, on account of Him who ceased from His work of creation, but ceased not from His work of providence: it is a rest for meditation of the law, not for idleness of the hands."[220] This was in addition to an instruction to "assemble . . . together every day, morning and evening, singing psalms and praying in the Lord's house . . . but principally on the Sabbath-day. And on the day of our Lord's resurrection, which is the Lord's day, meet more diligently."[221]

While in the Jewish tradition, believers fasted on the second and fifth days of the week, Christians created a different tradition to avoid being associated with the "hypocrites,"[222] as also noted in the previous chapter. In the Western church, fasts were observed on the fourth and seventh days of the week, but in the East, the Sabbath's continuing special place, in addition to Sunday, was recognized in that the fasts were to be "every fourth day of the week, and every day of the preparation, . . . for he will be guilty of sin who fasts on the Lord's day, being the day of the resurrec-

219. Donaldson, "Introductory Notice to *Constitutions*."

220. *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, 2.4.36, https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf07/anf07.ix.iii.iv.html. The Sabbath's unique place as a memorial of the creation is emphasized even more explicitly later in the *Constitutions*, specifically in 7.2.23 and 8.4.33.

221. *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, 2.7.59.

222. *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, 7.2.23, https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf07/anf07.ix.ix.ii.html; Christo, *History of the Seventh-Day Sabbath*, 15.

tion, or during the time of Pentecost, or, in general, who is sad on a festival day to the Lord. For on them we ought to rejoice, and not to mourn."[223]

That the Eastern Church continued to observe the Passover on the fourteenth is perhaps evident in the *Constitution*'s convoluted instructions regarding Easter, that is, to "observe carefully the vernal equinox, which occurs on the twenty-second of the twelfth month, which is Dystros (March), observing carefully until the twenty-first of the moon, lest the fourteenth of the moon shall fall on another week, and an error being committed, you should through ignorance celebrate the Passover twice in the year, or celebrate the day of the resurrection of our Lord on any other day than a Sunday."[224] G. Rouwhorst, who has written extensively about early Christian rituals, believes, as do several other scholars, that the text of the *Constitutions* "contains an old stratum, revised and adapted by several redactors of the fourth century, which reaches back to the third century and presupposes a Quartodeciman Easter practice,"[225] that is, an Easter that occurs on the fourteenth, the Jewish Passover. What's more interesting: Those Easter traditions in the East, well into the fourth century, Rouwhorst brings out, focused more on Jesus's death than on his resurrection—that is, on incidents associated with the Passover rather than on incidents associated with Easter.[226] Reading the *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, in other words, one is likely reading materials that were revised for use later by others, who held to differing traditions. Both a clearer dating of Passover/Easter and the way in which the *Con-*

223. *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, 7.2.23; Christo, *History of the Seventh-Day Sabbath*, 15.

224. *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, 5.3.17, https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf07/anf07.ix.vi.iii.html.

225. G. Rouwhorst, "Jewish Liturgical Traditions in Early Syrian Christianity," *Vigiliae Christianae* 51, no. 1 (March 1997): 82.

226. Rouwhorst, 82.

stitutions reflects layers of changing practices over time may be evidenced in the third-century *Didiscalia Apostolorum*, also known as the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, from which, as noted in the previous chapter, much of the *Constitutions* is drawn and also likely originating in Syria and used widely in Persia and the East.[227] Though containing largely negative comments with regard to the continuing observance of the Sabbath, many borrowed from arguments made in the *Epistle of Barnabus* and paralleling those of Justin Martyr, the *Didiscalia Apostolorum* notes this with regard to the preferred date for Easter: "Wherever, then, the Fourteenth of the Pascha falls, so keep it; for neither the month nor the day squares with the same season every year, but is variable."[228] In both the *Constitutions* and the *Didiscalia*, as they have come down to us, the Passover is presented as a day of fasting in preparation for the Easter Sunday observance to follow, rather than a day to be observed in the manner that Jewish people do, demonstrating a concerted effort to separate the two sets of Passover adherents, just as the fast days were also changed.

While Jewish custom continued its influence among Eastern Christians, other Christian sects in the East would have derived from teachers often associated with the so-called Gnostics, such as Marcion, Bardesanes, and Tatian. Each of these teachers had their own spin on Christian belief and were associated for a time with the Roman church or offshoots of it, before their adherents came east.

227. Philip, *East of the Euphrates*, chap. 2.

228. *Didiscalia Apostolorum*, trans. R. Hugh Connolly (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), chap. 21, v. 20, Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/didascalia.html.

Marcion

Of the three Gnostic teachers mentioned above, Marcion is the only one who did not originally derive from the Mesopotamian region and whose ideas were likely spread in the area not by himself but by his followers. Rather, Marcion originated from Sinope, along the southern coast of the Black Sea, in Asia Minor, around 85 CE.[229] Being the son of a bishop in the city, he likely had some familiarity with Jewish Christian practice, as would have most Christians at the time.[230] His unorthodox views with regard to both traditions as they have come down to us, however, or perhaps personal shortcomings, resulted in his father expelling him from the church, but he garnered enough of a following to be able to take recommendation letters to Ephesus and Smyrna, where his views were also rejected.[231] From there he would proceed to Rome around 140 CE, where he would meet the Antiochene Cerdo, whose views his own would in some ways mirror, as discussed in the previous chapter.[232] A shipmaster, Marcion had amassed enough of a personal fortune to be able to make a substantial donation to the church there—enough, perhaps, for a church building or a

229. Adolf von Harnack, *Marcion: The Gospel of the Alien God*, trans. John E. Steely and Lyle D. Bierma (Durham, N.C.: Labyrinth Press, 1990), 15; Hillar, *From Logos to Trinity*, 180.

230. Harnack, *Marcion*, 17, 15.

231. Harnack, 17. The fourth-century CE Christian historian Epiphanius's claims that Marcion "seduced a virgin," Harnack concludes, should be taken as a metaphor for his false teaching within the church rather than as a literal accusation. Harnack, 17.

232. Harnack, *Marcion*, 17; Hillar, *From Logos to Trinity*, 180; Glanville Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria from Seleucus to the Arab Conquest* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961), 291; G. Salmon, "Cerdo, Gnostic Teacher," in *A Dictionary of Early Christian Biography*, ed. Henry Wace and William C. Piercy (London: John Murray, 1911; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), Christian Classics Ethereal Library, https://www.ccel.org/ccel/wace/biodict.html?term=Cerdo,%20Gnostic%20teacher.

small estate.[233] In Rome, too, however, his teachings would eventually be rejected and the money returned.[234] Lacking a following within the confines of an already established sect, Marcion would start his own: The Church of Jesus Christ.[235] Followers of his ideas probably arrived in Edessa not long after.[236]

The unorthodox views Marcion held included many that have come to be associated with Gnosticism—and with the Church of the East: notably, various ascetic practices and dualism, which would lend credence to docetism, the belief that Jesus did not come in human flesh.[237] Marcion's ideas flowed most particularly from his dualistic view of the universe, a split of good from evil that mirrored some of the teachings of the Zoroastrians and a reason that his version of the faith may have met with success in the East. In fact, it met with so much success that at least one scholar, Walter F. Bauer, claims that the earliest Christianity in the area derived, not from Jewish elements, but entirely from Marcion, around 150 CE.[238] As Sten Hidal, writing about

233. Harnack, *Marcion*, 17. The two hundred thousand sesterces he donated is impossible to translate into equivalent species today. Most estimates range from one hundred thousand dollars to six hundred thousand, with some outliers going as high as ten million. "How Much Is That in Real Money?," GlobalSecurity.org, https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/spqr/money-1.htm. Peter Lampe gets around this indefiniteness by comparing the amount to the cost of being accepted into the various ranks of nobility and of certain real estate. See Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 245.

234. Harnack, *Marcion*, 18.

235. Harnack, 19; Hillar, *From Logos to Trinity*, 181.

236. Moffett, *History of Christianity in Asia*, 62.

237. Harnack, *Marcion*, 19; Philip, *East of the Euphrates*, chap. 2; Hillar, *From Logos to Trinity*, 180–181; Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (1979; New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 29; Walter H. Wagner, *After the Apostles: Christianity in the Second Century* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 113.

238. Sten Hidal, "Evidence for Jewish Believers in the Syriac Fathers," chapter 18 in Skarsaune and Hvalvik, *Jewish Believers in Jesus*,

evidence for Jewish believers in Syriac Christianity, notes, such a view merely "underlines the highly pluralistic form of early Christianity in Mesopotamia,"[239] one that allows us to point to numerous sources of origin, depending on which version of Christianity we want accept as orthodox or original. Indeed, Justin Martyr, writing in the second century CE, would complain of Marcion, among other unorthodox teachers: "All who take their opinions from these men, are . . . called Christians."[240] David G. K. Taylor, writing on a similar subject as Hidal, even goes so far as to claim that Addai was not Christian but Manichean and that later Christians adopted the famous missionary as their own and projected him back into the apostolic era. As such, "many of the early converts to 'Christianity' in Mesopotamia would not have been considered Christians by the later Nicene orthodox. . . . The great majority of Mesopotamian converts to Christianity must previously have been of Graeco-Roman or Zoroastrian religious belief, with a leavening of converts from Judaism."[241]

Marcion's version of the faith posited that the god who created the earth and whom Jewish scripture referenced was not the true god but a weaker, vengeful, legalistic one.[242] As Tertullian would put it in his work *Against Marcion*, Marcion's reasoning stemmed

> from the simple passage of our Lord's saying . . . how that the good tree brings not forth corrupt

569; David G. K. Taylor, "Coming of Christianity to Mesopotamia," 77; Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century*, 14.

239. Hidal, "Evidence for Jewish Believers," 569.

240. Justin Martyr, *The First Apology of Justin*, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, chap. 26, Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/justinmartyr-firstapology.html.

241. David G. K. Taylor, "Coming of Christianity to Mesopotamia," 77.

242. Wagner, *After the Apostles*, 76.

> fruit, neither the corrupt tree good fruit. Which means, that an honest mind and good faith cannot produce evil deeds, any more than an evil disposition can produce good deeds. Now . . . while morbidly brooding over the question of the origin of evil, his perception became blunted by the very irregularity of his researches; and when he found the Creator declaring, I am He that creates evil [Isaiah 45:7] inasmuch as he had already concluded from other arguments . . . that God is the author of evil, so he now applied to the Creator the figure of the corrupt tree bringing forth evil fruit, that is, moral evil, and then presumed that there ought to be another god, after the analogy of the good tree producing its good fruit. Accordingly, finding in Christ a different disposition, as it were—one of a simple and pure benevolence—differing from the Creator, he readily argued that in his Christ had been revealed a new and strange divinity.[243]

This other god was a purely good and loving one who offered to mankind redemption—escape from the created world and its god.[244] As he had not derived from the world's creator god, Jesus was not part of the physical realm but rather a phantasm, a mode of the good god, sent to show believers how to escape the grasp of the creator.[245] The redemptive god revealed by Jesus was so kind that he didn't

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243. Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, trans. by Peter Holmes, book 1, chap. 2, from *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, N.Y.: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/03121.htm.

244. Wagner, *After the Apostles*, 76–77; Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, chap. 28.

245. Harnack, *Marcion*, 83, 46.

even punish; by contrast, those who followed the creator god would face the fire of that god's wrath.[246]

Marcion's belief in two gods led him, further, to reject the Old Testament scriptures, not so much as false but rather as unuseful and inapplicable to believers of the better god.[247] (After all, the Old Testament was still true insofar as it reflected beliefs manifested among the Jewish people and revealed to mankind through the lesser creator, but choosing to follow the lesser, who had little to offer, was a distraction from one's understanding of the better god, who had his own son different from the Messiah of the Jewish scriptures.)[248] Marcion, instead, forged his own Bible centered around the Gospel of Luke and a set of Paul's letters, both with the corrupt Jewish influence redacted (his reason for rejecting also the other Gospels and New Testament letters).[249] Though these works do not survive, nor Marcion's treatise *Antitheses*, which outlined the differences between the god of the Old Testament and the true god, we have short passages preserved in the second-century writer Tertullian's *Against Marcion* from which one can forge a reasonable reconstruction, as Alfred Harnack does in his work on Marcion.

The apparent differences between the orthodox scripture and those portions that Marcion kept are striking. In Luke, for example, he lops off the opening chapters about Jesus's birth and childhood, all the way to Luke 4:32 ("And they were astonished at his doctrine"), with the exception of Luke 3:1, which provides a time and place for Jesus's

246. Harnack, 34, 90; Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, 1.27.

247. Wagner, *After the Apostles*, 77; Harnack, *Marcion*, 58; Alan Knight, *Primitive Christianity in Crisis* (Antioch, Calif.: A.R.K. Research, 2003), 50.

248. Harnack, *Marcion*, 46; Wagner, *After the Apostles*, 76.

249. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 3.11.7, 3.11.9, 3.12.12, 3.13.1, 3.14.4, Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/irenaeus-book3.html; Wagner, *After the Apostles*, 77; Harnack, *Marcion*, 57.

appearance ("in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar").[250] Even Paul's letters exhibit many changes. Half of Romans is deleted.[251] Passages such as Romans 1:17–18 necessitated such correcting. After all, Marcion could not well acknowledge the efficacy of the Old Testament scriptures, so he struck "It is written" in verse 17, and since his god has no wrath, verse 18 eliminates the necessary words from the phrase "the wrath of God."[252] Other letters also required changes. Paul's greeting in Galatians 1:1 becomes something akin to "Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, who raised him[self] from the dead," deleting "and God the Father" after "Christ" in order to present a modalist god who is responsible for his own resurrection (and who, not being human, never actually died).[253] In another instance, Colossians 1:15–17 goes from being "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist" to simply "he who is the image of the Invisible God, and he is before all things," since of course, Jesus could have no link to the creation.[254]

Marcion's rejection of the entire Old Testament did not mean that all laws voiced in the Jewish scripture were abrogated; rather, Marcion repositioned the motives for a believer's adherence to law.[255] Gone were teachings regarding sacrifices and other ceremonies, but moral laws

250. Harnack, *Marcion*, 43.
251. Harnack, 43.
252. Harnack, 34.
253. Harnack, 31.
254. Harnack, 35–36.
255. Harnack, 74.

remained, because they were good—like the good god.[256] It was still wrong to murder or to steal, for example, but one's attempts to avoid such actions were not to be based around a desire to please the god of this world or to avoid that god's punishment—one does not fear the better god, only the lesser one; rather, one's motives for obedience to law were to be based not in the law itself but in love, in faith in the good god and his goodness (from which good actions, in conformance to law but apart from it, sprang), and most to the point, one's motive's for law keeping rested in renunciation of the creator's physical world.[257] In other words, followers of Marcion were called to asceticism—and a radical one at that.[258]

Redemption meant giving up as many ties to the physical world and its creator as possible.[259] It meant gentleness, self-denial, vegetarianism, and celibacy.[260] After all, if the goal was to remove one's self from the physical realm, why would one condemn others to it by perpetuating the cycle of birth and death that the creator god had set in motion?[261] It meant a life of perpetual singleness.[262] Those who were serious about the faith did not marry (or avoided marital relations if already married), and it was only such followers who could be baptized or receive communion, a requirement that would also be common among some portions of the Christian faith in the East into the third century and that is implied, as we have seen, in *The Acts of Thomas*.[263] As such, the Marcionite faith fit well with the asceticism that would dominate the Christian

256. Harnack, 74.
257. Harnack, 74, 88.
258. Philip, *East of the Euphrates*, chap. 2; Harnack, *Marcion*, 96.
259. Harnack, *Marcion*, 76–77
260. Wagner, *After the Apostles*, 77.
261. Harnack, *Marcion*, 96.
262. Harnack, 96; Philip, *East of the Euphrates*, chap. 2; Wagner, *After the Apostles*, 77.
263. Harnack, *Marcion*, 96; Philip, *East of the Euphrates*, chap. 2.

faith as it would come to be known in Mesopotamia and, for good reason, could very well be taken as the origin of the entire Eastern faith, as scholars such as Walter Bauer have proposed.

Bardesanes

Marcion, however, was not the only proponent of particular beliefs in the East who would be accused of heresy by other early church writers. Others, such as Bardesanes, would also be, even as they stood against Marcion and claimed to be teaching the true faith. Unlike Marcion's likely Jewish Christian heritage along the south shore of the Black Sea, Bardesanes's background was rooted within Edessa, his place of birth, and its ancient Babylonian faith. Although his father became a priest of an ancient Canaanite religion (possibly worship of the goddess Tharatha, who was also popular in Edessa) and moved the family to the city of Hierapolis of Syria, along the route from Antioch to Babylon, Bardesanes, at age twenty-five, around 179 CE, traveled back to his birthplace, where he met Hystasp, the bishop of Edessa at the time, and moved by the latter's message, converted.[264]

Bardesanes's familiarity with and partial disavowal of ancient Babylonian astrology is noted in *The Book of the Laws of Various Countries*, a work usually attributed to his follower Philip but that largely consists of Bardesanes's

264. John Arendzen, "Bardesanes and Bardesanites," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 2 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907), http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02293a.htm; Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, 31, 157; P. O. Skjaervo, "Bardesanes," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, December 15, 1988, sec. 2, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/bardesanes-syr; Philip, *East of the Euphrates*, chap. 2; Barnard, "Origins and Emergence," 170; "Hierapolis," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 2008, Jewish Virtual Library, https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/Hierapolis.

own teaching.[265] "There are such men," Bardesanes admits, "those who are called Chaldaeans, and also others who are fond of this subtle knowledge, as I myself also once was."[266] The work, written in the form of a dialogue between Bardesanes and a few of his students or friends, is primarily an exploration of free will. "If God is . . . the creator of men," Bardesanes's friend Avida asks, by way of introduction, "and if it is His will that you should do that which you are commanded, why did He not so create men that they should not be able to do wrong, but should constantly be doing that which is right?"[267] Bardesanes's answer includes a short communiqué on how otherwise God would have simply created instruments, and a human would be no different than a "harp," which is played, or a "ship," which is steered, by another.[268] However, Bardesanes goes on to discuss in detail how nature, fate, and free will interact with one another and how the former two do not have full control over a human's ultimate decisions.[269]

Nature for Bardesanes is equivalent to the human body, the state of which one bears little control over (for example, the fact that we age), while to the mind Bardesanes assigns one's will (how we react to nature). "In the matters pertaining to their bodies," Bardesanes notes, "[humans] preserve their nature like animals, in the matters pertain-

265. David G. K. Taylor, "Coming of Christianity to Mesopotamia," 82; Skjaervo, "Bardesanes," sec. 1; Ute Possekel, "Bardaisan's Influence on Late Antique Christianity," *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 21 (2018), https://hugoye.bethmardutho.org/article/hv21n1possekel.

266. *Book of the Laws*.

267. *Book of the Laws*.

268. *Book of the Laws*.

269. *Book of the Laws*. A clear and compact summary of the work and its arguments is provided in Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Jewish Observance of the Sabbath in Bardaisan's *Book of the Laws of Countries*," *Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations* (2018): 1–4, Harvard University, preprint, http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:10861157.

ing to their minds they do that which they choose."[270] The proof for this lies in the fact that not all humans do the same thing, live in the same way, or react to situations in the same manner. "There are some . . . that eat flesh," Bardesanes says, "and do not touch bread; and there are some . . . that make a distinction between the several kinds of flesh-food; and there are some . . . that do not eat the flesh of any animal whatever."[271] Further, humans are not bound to remain in such ways of life. "There are those who once were profligates and drunkards," Bardesanes remarks, "and, when the admonition of good counsels reached them, they became pure and sober, and spurned their bodily appetites. And there are those who once behaved with purity and sobriety; and when they turned away from right admonition, and dared to set themselves against the commands of Deity and of their teachers, they fell from the way of truth, and became profligates and revellers."[272]

Next, Bardesanes turns to fate. For him, fate "is itself nothing more than a certain order of procession, which has been given to the Potentates and Elements by God; and in conformity with this said procession and order, intelligences undergo change when they descend to be with the soul, and souls undergo change when they descend to be with bodies."[273] In other words, humans do not choose whether they are born into riches or poverty, ill health or good. Thus, fate works with and on the body to "produce effects of various kinds: at one time helping Nature and augmenting its power, and at another crippling and baffling it."[274] However, in the end,

270. *Book of the Laws*.
271. *Book of the Laws*.
272. *Book of the Laws*.
273. *Book of the Laws*.
274. *Book of the Laws*.

> Just as we see that Fate crushes Nature, so can we also see the freedom of man defeating and crushing Fate itself—not, however, in everything—just as also Fate itself does not in everything defeat Nature. For it is proper that the three things, Nature, and Fate, and Freedom, should be continued in existence until the procession of which I before spoke be completed, and the appointed measure and number of its evolutions be accomplished, even as it seemed good to Him who ordains of what kind shall be the mode of life and the end of all creatures, and the condition of all beings and natures.[275]

For Bardesanes, God's will supersedes all: "There is nothing that can stay that Great and Holy Will."[276] However, by his kindness and forbearance, living things are allowed to be "governed by their own will" until such time is "brought to an end."[277] And while fate and nature may have their effect on human will too, they never completely abrogate it.

Further evidence for this is given in the last section of the dialogue, wherein Bardesanes discusses the effect of the Zodiac on human behavior across the planet, the argument being that if humans were in fact relegated to follow the astrological signs under which they were born, then humans born in particular places would not all follow the same customs. What follows then is a summary of the customs of the various cultures across the known world. A counterargument is then made, that humans are born within seven astrological zones, over which particular stars (or really, the planets) have control and thus determine such customs. At this point, Bardesanes points to the customs of Jewish people and of Christians, which he notes

275. *Book of the Laws*.
276. *Book of the Laws*.
277. *Book of the Laws*.

remain similar even while these two peoples are scattered across the various zones. Thus, men are not bound to a fate determined by the stars.[278]

Bardesanes's claims with regard to a "certain order of procession . . . given to the Potentates and Elements by God," however, suggest that Bardesanes saw the stars as living elements, who nevertheless had *some* influence on human beings.[279] Thus, Bardesanes did not completely leave behind his astrological past. This may be part of the reason for Eusebius's assertion that Bardesanes "was at first a follower of [Gnostic teacher] Valentinus, but afterward, having rejected his teaching and having refuted most of his fictions, he fancied that he had come over to the more correct opinion. Nevertheless he did not entirely wash off the filth of the old heresy."[280] Valentinus's ideas centered on the Gnostic concept, discussed in the previous chapter, that varying levels of beings called aeons, as represented in the heavens, separated man from God.[281] Bardesanes's system, at least as described in *The Book of the Laws*, however, does not appear to be heavily Valentinian, and other historians describe Bardesanes not as having been a former adherent of Valentinus but a later convert to his system, an accusation that seems unlikely given that Bardesanes apparently wrote a tract against Valentinus in addition to one against Marcion.[282] Two circumstances are

278. *Book of the Laws*.

279. *Book of the Laws*; Ute Possekel, "Bardaisan of Edessa: Philosopher or Theologian?," *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 10, no. 3 (2007): 453; Possekel, "Bardaisan's Influence," secs. 2, 6; Cohen, "Jewish Observance of the Sabbath," 1.

280. Eusebius, *Church History*, 4.30.3, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250104.htm.

281. Knight, *Primitive Christianity in Crisis*, 53; Wagner, *After the Apostles*, 77–78.

282. Barnard, "Origins and Emergence," 171; Arendzen, "Bardesanes and Bardesanites"; Skjaervo, "Bardesanes," sec. 2; Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, 159.

likely at work here. First are some cosmetic similarities between Bardesane's views and Valentinus's, and second is the manner in which later adherents of Bardesanes transformed his teachings.[283] As little of Bardesanes's writing has been preserved, it is difficult to assess how much later writings about him reflect his own views as opposed to those who came after him.

From *The Book of the Laws of Various Countries*, we can glean some basic ideas about Bardesanes's views with regard to the soul and the body that seem to match up with some of the accusations made against his teaching by the third-century heresiologist Hippolytus, the fourth-century Syrian Ephrem, and other much later writers, such as the twelfth-century Michael the Syrian. Recall that in discussing fate, Bardesanes noted that "intelligences undergo change when they descend to be with the soul, and souls undergo change when they descend to be with bodies."[284] For Bardesanes, human identity, or intelligence or spirit, was located "in the mind or soul—the seat of free will."[285] The body, by contrast, was "subject to disturbing planetary influences."[286] As such, Bardesanes believed that "only the soul would rise at the resurrection."[287] In fact, it was the soul, not the body (which nature decreed would disintegrate anyway), that died because of Adam's sin.[288] The Bardesanes scholar Ute Possekel completes the distinct view of the afterlife succinctly: "At the time of a person's death, Bardaisan thought, the body disintegrates, and the soul experiences a kind of death as well, understood not as a complete decomposition, but as a shadowy existence

283. Skjaervo, "Bardesanes," sec. 2; Arendzen, "Bardesanes and Bardesanites."
284. *Book of the Laws*.
285. Possekel, "Bardasain of Edessa," 453.
286. Possekel, 453; Moffett, *History of Christianity in Asia*, 67.
287. Possekel, 453.
288. Possekel, 454.

in the underworld. Due to Adam's fall, souls are no longer able to rise up to their proper place. Through Christ . . . the death that Adam brought in was overcome, and the human soul once again was made able to rise up and cross over into the kingdom."[289] Such a view fits well with Hippolytus's accusation that Bardesanes "assert[ed] that the body of the Saviour was spiritual," rather than "animal," that is, flesh.[290] Bardesanes, in Hippolytus's view, in other words, was, like Marcion, a docetist.[291] Such beliefs with regard to the soul descending from above and then being unable to reascend, along with the fact that Bardesanes was a prolific hymn writer, having written his own book of 150 psalms, have also led some scholars to believe that he was the author of the "Hymn of the Pearl" found in *The Acts of Thomas*, though Bardesanes did not come close to sharing that book's ascetic views with regard to sex.[292]

Views among later adherents of Bardesanes seem to have parallels among earlier faiths in the Mesopotamian region. One involved the origin of Jesus, who was said to have been brought forth by the Father and Mother of Life, which in turn came to be associated with the sun and moon, as "male and female principles."[293] In this, we might recognize elements of the Parthian, and most especially the Edessene, proclivity for the adoration of the sun and moon. A Gnostic dualist view of the universe, in which light/good faces off against dark/evil from eternity, the devil having not been created by God, would seem to paral-

289. Possekel, 454.

290. Hippolytus of Rome, *The Refutation of All Heresies*, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 6.30, Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/hippolytus6.html.

291. Arendzen, "Bardesanes and Bardesanites." Moffett, *History of Christianity in Asia*, 68–69, says Bardesanes was a docetist.

292. Arendzen, "Bardesanes and Bardesanites"; Skjaervo, "Bardesanes," sec. 3; Moffett, *History of Christianity in Asia*, 56, 67–68.

293. Arendzen, "Bardesanes and Bardesanites"; Skjaervo, "Bardesanes," sec. 3.

lel that of the Zoroastrians.[294] Valentinus's concept of a distant God who brought forth various descending levels of aeons might be seen, rather superficially, in views among Bardesanes's adherents that six beings existed from eternity, four of which God (the Stranger, which may or may not have been the Father of Life) blew his life into.[295] The sixth, darkness, in the depths, is brought to life only when the four other elements sink toward it and intermingle with it.[296] From Bardesanes's own account in *The Book of the Laws of Various Countries*, however, his views with regard to Christianity appear to be much more typical of the later post-Judaic mainstream:

> On one day, the first of the week, we assemble ourselves together, and on the days of the readings we abstain from taking sustenance. The brethren who are in Gaul do not take males for wives, nor those who are in Parthia two wives; nor do those who are in Judaea circumcise themselves; nor do our sisters who are among the Geli consort with strangers; nor do those brethren who are in Persia take their daughters for wives; nor do those who are in Media abandon their dead, or bury them alive, or give them as food to the dogs; nor do those who are in Edessa kill their wives or their sisters when they commit impurity, but they withdraw from them, and give them over to the judgment of God; nor do those who are in Hatra stone thieves to death; but, wherever they are, and in whatever place they are found, the laws of the several countries do not hinder them from obeying the law of their Sovereign, Christ; nor does the Fate of

294. Arendzen, "Bardesanes and Bardesanites"; Possekel, "Bardaisan's Influence," secs. 1, 6; Skjaervo, "Bardesanes," sec. 3.

295. Skjaervo, "Bardesanes," sec. 3.

296. Skjaervo, sec. 3.

> the celestial Governors compel them to make use of things which they regard as impure.[297]

Whatever the views of Bardesanes within his own day, however, they were apparently significantly enough heretical that Aqai, Hystasp's successor, eventually excommunicated him, or so goes the story preserved by Michael the Syrian.[298] As with so much of Eastern Christianity, the chronology of what few accounts we have is somewhat contradictory. In Michael's chronicle, the bishop who followed Aqai in Edessa was Qona, who did not serve until 297 CE, under Diocletian; those who proceeded Hystasp include, in the apostles' day, Addai, Aggai, Palut; Abshelama; during Trajan's reign, Barsamya; Tiridat, Bozin, Shalula, Guria, and Izani.[299] No other sources include Izani, Hystasp, or Aqai as bishops.[300] Bardesanes apparently died in 222 CE, in Armenia, where he went to live and preach after the Roman overthrow, around 214, of Abgar IX, in whose court he served and with whom he had had a youthful friendship.[301] This would make him a contemporary of Palut in accounts that claim Palut as having been ordained by Serapion. If the ruling family indeed converted under Abgar VIII, it's quite possible that the Christianity that Bardesanes adopted was one in line with that of the ruling class; indeed, Bardesanes makes note of the Edessene ruler's conversion when he states that "when King Abgar became a believer he commanded that every one that [castrates themselves

297. *Book of the Laws*.

298. Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, 30–31; Moffett, *History of Christianity in Asia*, 69.

299. Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, 31–32.

300. Burkitt, 31; Skjaervo, "Bardesanes"; Possekel, "Bardesain's Influence."

301. Arendzen, "Bardesanes and Bardesanites"; Moffett, *History of Christianity in Asia*, 69; J. B. Segal, "Abgar," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, July 15, 2011, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/abgar-dynasty-of-edessa-2nd-century-bc-to-3rd-century-ad.

in honor of Tharatha] so should have his hand cut off."[302] The political realignment of Edessa into the Antiochene-Roman sphere, one that deposed the king in part through anti-Christian forces in Edessa, would have taken place at about the same time as Bardesanes's dismissal from the church by the bishop Aqai and at a time when Palut was also apparently serving as bishop.[303] If, by contrast, we accept Michael the Syrian's chronology, then the story of Palut's ordination is fantasy, and the gap between Aqai and Qona may well represent a change in the affiliation of the dominant form of the local Christianity. Indeed, despite the departure of Bardesanes, his version of Christianity would maintain significance in Edessa into the fifth century, when the orthodox bishop Rabbula destroyed its meeting places and attempted to force conversions to his version of the faith.[304] Thus, we likely have multiple strains of Christianity, each with their own adherents and influences, that Michael the Syrian has mashed together.[305] Those strains would continue throughout the East long after Bardesanes's demise, as we have records of a sect affiliated with the teachings of Bardesanes into the twelfth century.[306] Indeed, views of Bardesanes as a heretic seem to grow more fierce both in time and in proximity to Mesopotamia. Despite minor objections by such early Western historians as Julius Africanus, Eusebius, and Jerome, all also "articulate their admiration for the man: his learning, his eloquence, his refutation of heresy."[307] By contrast, early Eastern theologians, such as Ephrem, retain a much more hostile attitude, in part, perhaps, because of the con-

302. *Book of the Laws*.
303. Arendzen, "Bardesanes and Bardesanites."
304. Arendzen; Skjaervo, "Bardesanes"; Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, 189.
305. Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, 32–33.
306. Arendzen, "Bardesanes and Bardesanites."
307. Possekel, "Bardaisan's Influence," sec. 1.

tinuing influence, perhaps even in a more radically unorthodox form, of Bardesanes's sect in the region.[308]

Tatian

Another teacher from northern Mesopotamia, in this case, Assyria, who was associated with Gnosticism by later writers was Tatian.[309] Like Bardesanes, Tatian likely grew up the son of parents whose background was in the local gods of the region.[310] Tatian's conversion, however, follows a line closer to that of Justin Martyr, whose student he would become.[311] After a Greek education and a wide set of travels, Tatian would eventually settle in Rome, where he would become familiar with the "barbarian" writings of the Jewish people and, thus, come to an understanding of Christianity.[312] Like Justin, Tatian would view Christianity

308. Possekel, sec. 1.

309. Tatian, Tatian's *Address to the Greeks*, trans. J. E. Ryland, chap. 42, from *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, N.Y.: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0202.htm; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1.28.1, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/irenaeus-book1.html; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 3.12.82; Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*, 8.9, 10.14; Eusebius, *Church History*, 4.29.1–3; Epiphanius of Salamis, The *Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis: A Treatise against Eight Sects in Three Books*, trans. Frank Williams (1987–2009), 1.46, http://www.masseiana.org/panarion_bk1.htm; Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century*, 1–2; Philip, *East of the Euphrates*, chap. 2; Barnard, "Origins and Emergence," 167; Moffett, *History of Christianity in Asia*, 75; Peter M. Head, "Tatian's Christology and Its Influence on the Composition of the Diatessaron," *Tyndale Bulletin* 43, no. 1 (1992): 123.

310. Philip, *East of the Euphrates*, chap. 2; Moffett, *History of Christianity in Asia*, 74–75; Head, "Tatian's Christology and Its Influence," 123.

311. Philip, *East of the Euphrates*, chap. 2; Head, "Tatian's Christology and Its Influence," 123; Tatian, *Address to the Greeks*, chap. 29.

312. Tatian, *Address to the Greeks*, chaps. 29, 35; Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century*, 1–2.

as a form of philosophy—indeed, the most noble and genuine form of philosophy.[313] All other philosophy postdated Jewish thinking and was otherwise absurd.[314] Tatian's distaste for Greek philosophy is a major focus of his only surviving work, *Address to the Greeks* (also known as the *Oration*).

From the *Address*, we can glean some aspects of Tatian's thought and beliefs. A major problem, however, arises with regard to what stage in Tatian's thinking the *Address* was written. Tatian would leave Rome and Justin's orbit and return to Mesopotamia around 172 CE, settling near Arbela and founding his own school.[315] Without Justin's influence, early Christian historians state, Tatian would turn to Gnostic heresies, which he then professed to others. The longest, earliest description of Tatian's turn to Gnostic ideas comes from Irenaeus's *Against Heresies* in the late second century, not long after Tatian would have founded his school: "After [Justin's] martyrdom [Tatian] separated from the Church, and, excited and puffed up by the thought of being a teacher, as if he were superior to others, he composed his own peculiar type of doctrine. He invented a system of certain invisible aeons, like the followers of Valentinus; while, like Marcion and Saturninus, he declared that marriage was nothing else than corruption and fornication."[316] Clement of Alexandria's discussion regarding Tatian notes offhandedly that Tatian "would do away with the law as originating from another God,"[317] also placing Tatian in

313. Tatian, *Address to the Greeks*, chaps. 31–32, 35, 40, 42; Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century*, 73, 109.

314. Tatian, *Address to the Greeks*, chaps. 2–3, 10, 22, 25–26, 31, 36–40.

315. Moffett, *History of Christianity in Asia*, 72; Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century*, 1–2.

316. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1.28.1.

317. Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata, or Miscellanies*, 3.12.82, Early Christian Writings, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/clement-stromata-book3-english.html.

line with such thinkers as Marcion and Valentinus. Hippolytus of Rome, in the third century, similarly notes that Tatian "says that there are certain invisible Aeons, and that by some one of these the world below has been created, and the things existing in it" and that Tatian "asserts that marriage is destruction."[318] Eusebius's fourth-century account of Tatian's beliefs essentially quotes Irenaeus, and Epiphanius of Salamis's likewise paraphrases what came before.[319] Jerome, also in the fourth century, would apparently claim that Tatian was a docetist.[320]

Address to the Greeks records few such ideas explicitly, meaning that it would have had to have been written earlier in Tatian's life, likely while he was still in Rome, or that such early Christian writers read Tatian's beliefs in light of Gnostic ideas espoused by others. The *Address*, on the whole, seems fairly mainstream in its presentation of Christian doctrine, at least by what would come to be accepted of second-century beliefs by later Christians. Writing in the fourth century, Eusebius would even claim the *Address* to "be the best and most useful of all [Tatian's] works."[321] Although the work largely focuses on debunking the Greek religious and philosophical system in favor of a Christian one, it provides a summary of quite a number of doctrinal beliefs. Among them is a belief in one God who "alone is without beginning, and He Himself is the beginning of all things. God is a Spirit, not pervading matter, but the Maker of material spirits, and of the forms that are in matter; He is invisible, impalpable, being Himself the

318. Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*, 10.14, 8.9, https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/hippolytus10.html and https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/hippolytus8.html.

319. Eusebius, *Church History*, 4.29.1–3; Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion*, 1.46.

320. Barnard, "Origins and Emergence," 167; Head, "Tatian's Christology and Its Influence," 124. Head notes that this claim may be a corruption. Head, 124n13.

321. Eusebius, *Church History*, 4.29.7.

Father of both sensible and invisible things. Him we know from His creation, and apprehend His invisible power by His works."[322] For Tatian, then, God is separated from matter (not unlike the First Cause postulated by Plato, who likely was an influence, despite Tatian's protestations against Greek philosophy);[323] however, God is also the ultimate maker of it. Between God the Father and matter, in Tatian's thinking, is the Logos, who by the Father's simple will "springs forth; and the Logos, not coming forth in vain, becomes the first-begotten work of the Father. Him (the Logos) we know to be the beginning of the world. . . . [A]s the Logos, begotten in the beginning, begot in turn our world."[324] Thus, Tatian espouses a Logos "emanating from the Father," like Plato's demiurge, but not really separate from the Father;[325] yet as with Paul's assertion, in Colossians 1:16, by that Logos "were all things created."

Among those things created were the angels ("the Logos, too, before the creation of men, was the Framer of angels"),[326] but the *Address* provides only marginal sense that such angels equivocate to Valentinian aeons, who in turn created their own world. Rather, Tatian focuses on how what he calls demons originated in the fall of angels: "That first-begotten one [not the Logos but rather one who claimed a position as firstborn] through his transgression and ignorance becomes a demon; and they who imitated him, that is his illusions, have become a host of demons, and through their freedom of choice have been given up to their own infatuation."[327] The chief demon, in turn, brought about mankind's own downfall and mortality by attempt-

322. Tatian, *Address to the Greeks*, chap. 4.
323. Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century*, 124.
324. Tatian, *Address to the Greeks*, chap. 5.
325. Tatian, chap. 7; Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century*, 127.
326. Tatian, *Address to the Greeks*, chap. 7.
327. Tatian, chap. 7; Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century*, 99, 135.

ing to get mankind to worship him: "When men attached themselves to one who was more subtle than the rest, having regard to his being the first-born, and declared him to be God, though he was resisting the law of God, then the power of the Logos excluded the beginner of the folly and his adherents from all fellowship with Himself."[328] The Greek gods, for Tatian, are these demons: "Therefore the demons . . . having received their structure from matter and obtained the spirit which inheres in it, became intemperate and greedy; some few, indeed, turning to what was purer, but others choosing what was inferior in matter, and conforming their manner of life to it. These beings, produced from matter, but very remote from right conduct, you, O Greeks, worship."[329] And these demons, in turn, have attempted to trap men in superstition through belief in the Zodiac:

> Such are the demons; these are they who laid down the doctrine of Fate. Their fundamental principle was the placing of animals in the heavens. For the creeping things on the earth, and those that swim in the waters, and the quadrupeds on the mountains, with which they lived when expelled from heaven,—these they dignified with celestial honour, in order that they might themselves be thought to remain in heaven, and, by placing the constellations there, might make to appear rational the irrational course of life on earth.[330]

Tatian's views regarding the demons being fallen angels, thus, seem to align roughly with those espoused by the writers of the New Testament, though for rhetorical purposes he ties such demons to Greek mythology. John,

328. Tatian, *Address to the Greeks*, chap. 7
329. Tatian, chap. 12.
330. Tatian, chap. 9.

for example, in Revelation 12:9, would state that Satan "was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." Peter, too, writing in his second letter, would note that "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell" (that is, a place of restraint; 2 Pet. 2:4). Perhaps the closest to tying Greek mythology to demonology would be Paul, who would talk of certain men beguiling believers into the "worshipping of angels" in his letter to the Colossians (Col. 2:18). However, one could also read into Tatian's theories with regard to demons various Gnostic views insofar as he claims that the Greek gods are in fact spiritual beings, created by the Logos, who have chosen to turn to evil and thus imprisoned men through their teachings. Even so, we do not have anything close to a theory espousing "another God," similar to Marcion's, as Clement would claim. Rather, we have a "god of this world" (as Paul would describe Satan in 2 Cor. 4:4) and the demons—the fake gods—who follow him, who in turn attempt to usurp the creator God's authority.

Tatian's views regarding demons being structured by matter may seem confusing, given that they are supposedly spiritual beings. This might be explained, in part, by Tatian's belief that living creatures have one body and two spirits, one of which he calls the soul: "We recognise two varieties of spirit, one of which is called the soul, but the other is greater than the soul, an image and likeness of God: both existed in the first men, that in one sense they might be material, and in another superior to matter. The case stands thus: we can see that the whole structure of the world, and the whole creation, has been produced from matter, and the matter itself brought into existence by God."[331] The soul then, for Tatian, is "a Spirit that pervades matter [but that] is inferior to the more divine spirit."[332]

331. Tatian, chap. 12.
332. Tatian, chap. 4.

Demons have a soul (a "material spirit"),[333] but they have been separated from the divine spirit through their concerns with ruling matter outside God's authority.

Man also, at one time, according to Tatian, had two spirits, as well as a body.[334] In aligning with the false gods, however, mankind lost the divine spirit, leaving humans with just soul and body.[335] The body decays, while the soul itself, for Tatian, is "not in itself immortal . . . but mortal. Yet it is possible for it not to die. If, indeed, it knows not the truth, it dies, and is dissolved with the body, but rises again at last at the end of the world with the body, receiving death by punishment in immortality. But, again, if it acquires the knowledge of God, it dies not, although for a time it be dissolved."[336] Tatian, in other words, believed in the resurrection and a final judgment. In another passage, he notes:

> We believe that there will be a resurrection of bodies after the consummation of all things . . . a resurrection once for all, when our periods of existence are completed, and in consequence solely of the constitution of things under which men alone live, for the purpose of passing judgment upon them. . . . [N]ot existing before I was born, I knew not who I was, and only existed in the potentiality of fleshly matter, but being born, after a former state of nothingness, I have obtained through my birth a certainty of my existence; in the same way, having been born, and through death existing no

333. Tatian, chap. 12.

334. Tatian, chap. 12; Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century*, 129.

335. Tatian, *Address to the Greeks*, chap. 12–13; Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century*, 129, 137.

336. Tatian, *Address to the Greeks*, chap. 13.

> longer, and seen no longer, I shall exist again, just as before I was not, but was afterwards born.[337]

Because mankind has been separated from the divine spirit, a major goal of humans is to "seek for what we once had, but have lost, to unite the soul with the Holy Spirit, and to strive after union with God."[338]

The ultimate fate for demons, who possess just a soul, is a bit difficult to parse. Tatian claims that they "do not indeed die easily" because they "do not partake of the flesh."[339] At the same time, he seems to denote that the misery in which they live in the present age will be extended interminably into the future: "The demons, who abuse the present life to purposes of wrong-doing, dying continually even while they live, will have hereafter the same immortality, like that which they had during the time they lived."[340] That immortality, Tatian notes, will not be one "with enjoyment."[341] Although the fate of human beings who follow a wicked path would seem to be one of death, given that neither the body nor the soul are immortal, one can read Tatian's claim that after resurrection and judgment, such people receive "the painful with immortality" as either eternal suffering like that of the demons or eternal death—either way, the penalty lasts forever.[342]

Although the *Address to the Greeks* lacks explicit discussion of the aeons Tatian is accused of promoting or of Christ's never having come in the flesh, the address does include passages that may demonstrate Tatian's affinity for asceticism, including celibacy, much in keeping with most other early Eastern Christian writings. In chapter 8,

337. Tatian, chap. 6.
338. Tatian, chap. 15.
339. Tatian, chap. 14.
340. Tatian, chap. 14.
341. Tatian, chap. 14.
342. Tatian, chap. 14.

for instance, in comparing the Greek gods, or demons, with humans, Tatian includes marriage among a list of mostly disreputable actions humans copy from those demons: "But must not those who are spectators of single combats and are partisans on one side or the other, and he who marries and is a pederast and an adulterer, who laughs and is angry, who flees and is wounded, be regarded as mortals? For, by whatever actions they manifest to men their characters, by these they prompt their hearers to copy their example. And are not the demons themselves, with Zeus at their head, subjected to Fate, being overpowered by the same passions as men?" Elsewhere, he seems to belittle Greek customs when he criticizes Greeks for eating meat, rather than being vegetarians: "You slaughter animals for the purpose of eating their flesh."[343] The circumstances for both these quotes, however, might easily be dismissed in terms of their true tie to asceticism. In the case of meat eating, Tatian makes his comments in the context of gladiatorial sports, which most Christians, like most religious Jewish people, would have avoided.[344] Likewise, Tatian's listing of marriage among things that the Greek gods indulge in might be said simply to be noting the very physical actions such gods participate in, for after all, laughter, which is also included in the list, need not be taken negatively.

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343. Tatian, chap. 23.

344. On Christian criticisms of gladiatorial spectacles, see "Christian Influence Helped End Roman Games," *Redlands Daily Facts*, June 16, 2010, https://www.redlandsdailyfacts.com/2010/06/16/christian-influence-helped-end-roman-games/; Tamara, "The End of the Gladiators," *History Notes*, September 9, 2016, https://historynotes.info/the-end-of-the-gladiators-3180/; Kyle Butt, "Gladiators and Christianity Clash," Apologetics Press, October 1, 2010, https://apologeticspress.org/gladiators-and-christianity-clash-3697/; Martin Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem: The Clash of Ancient Civilizations* (New York: Vintage, 2007), 291. On Jewish criticism, see Goodman, 297.

Perhaps the strongest indications of Tatian's predilection for an ascetic lifestyle in the *Address* come in his claim that "if you are superior to the passions, you will despise all worldly things" and in a chapter devoted to the free will of humans in which he notes:

> I do not wish to be a king; I am not anxious to be rich; I decline military command; I detest fornication; I am not impelled by an insatiable love of gain to go to sea; I do not contend for chaplets; I am free from a mad thirst for fame; I despise death; I am superior to every kind of disease; grief does not consume my soul. . . . The rich lack many things, and are glorious only through the estimation they are held in; but the poor man and he who has very moderate desires, seeking as he does only the things suited to his lot, more easily obtains his purpose. . . . Why are you fated to grasp at things often, and often to die? Die to the world, repudiating the madness that is in it. Live to God, and by apprehending Him lay aside your old nature.[345]

Even here, however, one might argue that Tatian's assertions merely mimic various comments made by the New Testament writers. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself," Jesus would be quoted as saying (Matt. 16:24). "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth," he is quoted saying elsewhere, "where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matt. 6:19–20). Paul would require followers to "mortify therefore [their] members which are upon the earth" by avoiding fornication and covetousness (Col. 3:5). Peter similarly would tell followers to "abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Pet. 2:11). And John would note that Christians

345. Tatian, *Address to the Greeks*, chaps. 19, 11.

should "love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (1 John 2:15). None of these teachers, however, explicitly condemned marriage or meat eating or required a renunciation of all physical possessions.

To find more-certain references to ascetic practices within Tatian's writings, we need to turn to another work, his *Diatessaron*, a harmony of the four Gospels, made into one narrative by combining in more-or-less chronological order the events and words recounted in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.[346] Because it was one of the few early versions of the Gospels available in Syriac translation, the harmony, written no later than 172 or 173 CE, about the time that Tatian returned to Mesopotamia from Rome but based on Western manuscripts, served as the main source of Gospel information for much of the Eastern church from the late second century into the fifth, when the Edessene bishop Rabbula suppressed it in favor of a revision of the old Syriac version of the four Gospels, along with most of the rest of New Testament, that had been revised from the Greek and that had become available at least since the time of Palut.[347]

No full version of the *Diatessaron* survives in its Syriac original, meaning that we are reliant on translations or other authors' quotes from it for any account of what it contained.[348] Nevertheless, those translations and quota-

346. Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, 47–48; Philip, *East of the Euphrates*, chap. 2.

347. Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, 67–68, 75–77; Philip, *East of the Euphrates*, chap. 2; Barnard, "Origins and Emergence," 168, 169. Moffett notes that while the "emerging conclusion by many scholars" is that the *Diatessaron* predated earlier versions of the Gospels in the Syriac, some scholars claim "the oldest translation of the Gospels from the original Greek" was the "Old Syriac separate Gospels," while others say the "old Latin." Moffett, *History of Christianity in Asia*, 74.

348. Head, "Tatian's Christology and Its Influence," 125. Head, in his analysis, draws from the fourth-century Ephrem of Edessa's *Commentary* on the *Diatessaron*, an Arabic translation of the work (or pos-

tions are illuminating, insofar as they present a Gospel tradition in keeping with the ascetic leanings of much of the Eastern church.[349] Various word choices manifest emphases not present in the Greek manuscripts, and other passages that might have contradicted such views were apparently wholesale dropped.[350] Among the passages dropped were the genealogies present in Matthew 1:1–17 and Luke 3:23–28, one of the primary reasons Tatian was likely accused of denying Jesus's humanity.[351] Given the way in which Jesus's humanity is emphasized elsewhere in the harmony, however, it makes more sense to see the deletion as emblematic of Tatian's ascetic views regarding marriage and sex, insofar as such a genealogy emphasizes marriage and sexual union throughout Jesus's physical line.[352] Emblematic of changes related to celibacy would also be Tatian's rendering of Luke 2:36, which recounts the prophetess living with her husband "seven years from her virginity"; Tatian's rendering, by contrast, in many of the versions preserved for us, notes that Anna remained a virgin, even in marriage, by changing the preposition in the phrase quoted from "from" to "in."[353] Similarly, in Luke 14:26, where Jesus says, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and

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sibly of yet another translation of the work) made around 1000 CE, and a sixth-century Latin manuscript that preserves the book's order. Various medieval harmonies may exhibit some Tatianic influence but are not dependent on Tatian's work as a whole. Head, 127.

349. Barnard, "Origins and Emergence," 169.

350. Philip, *East of the Euphrates*, chap. 2; Barnard, "Origins and Emergence," 168–169.

351. Barnard, "Origins and Emergence," 169; Head, "Tatian's Christology and Its Influence," 124, 132, 137. Head notes the various contradictions among early critics of Tatian, some claiming that Tatian denied the divinity of Jesus and others claiming that Tatian denied Jesus's humanity. Head, 124.

352. Head, "Tatian's Christology and Its Influence," 132, 137.

353. Barnard, "Origins and Emergence," 168; Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century*, 147.

brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple," various versions of Tatian's text replace "hate" with "abandon," reflecting not just a matter of prioritizing Jesus before family but of actual renunciation of the family.[354] Other passages include changes that do away with the use of alcohol; Tatian's Jesus, for example, is not accused of being either glutton or a winebibber, as he is in standard renderings Matthew 11:19.[355]

Although what we have of Tatian's writing suggests that he may indeed have endorsed asceticism, including celibacy, questions remain regarding the degree to which such beliefs tied to other Gnostic traditions and the degree to which Tatian actually promoted them. While Emily J. Hunt, in a work that focuses on the foundations of Tatian's thinking, especially insofar as they informed his *Address to the Greeks*, sees it likely that although few direct references to asceticism exist in the *Address*, such lack of explicitness actually "proves that asceticism is a very basic and important part of Tatian's faith" insofar as he feels no need to emphasize it.[356] She also acknowledges, however, that such paucity of mention of asceticism could also indicate the opposite—that it did not play an important part of Tatian's beliefs.[357] Many, but not all, of the changes to the Gospels present in the *Diatessaron*, for example, especially those related to alcohol, appear only in Ephrem's commentary on the harmony and may, instead, reflect Ephrem's own asceticism or that of the editor of the version of the *Diatessaron* he used to write his commentary rather than Tatian's original text.[358] It is also possible that Tatian's devotion to asceticism grew after Justin Martyr died, once he returned to Mesopotamia, and as he grew older, as his various de-

354. Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century*, 149–150.
355. Hunt, 148; Head, "Tatian's Christology and Its Influence," 129.
356. Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century*, 153.
357. Hunt, 153.
358. Hunt, 149, 150.

tractors claimed, meaning that if the *Address* was written earlier and the *Diatessaron* later, the two may reflect differing stages of Tatian's thought.[359] More interestingly, Hunt notes, because whatever level of Tatian's asceticism exists does not seem uncharacteristic of many other well-accepted writers in the early Christian East, such as the third- and fourth-century Aphrahat and Ephrem, it may also be that charges of Gnosticism, such as connections to Valentinianism, simply reflect

> political propaganda rather than a true representation of Tatian's views. At the end of the second century some fairly major changes were happening with western Christianity; the stream that was to become known as "orthodoxy" was beginning to achieve dominance, and the consolidation of that power involved an increasing intolerance towards more extreme Christian groups and a formalization of the content of mainstream Christian teaching. It may well have been Tatian's disillusionment with the direction that the mainstream church was taking that led him to leave Rome. At any rate, Irenaeus' claim of apostasy seems a convenient way to discredit Tatian whilst retaining the teaching of Justin for orthodoxy.[360]

If that be so, Tatian's dismissal by Western writers would reflect yet another attempt by the Roman church to establish its dominance, much like its linking of Addai to the Antiochene chain of bishops.

359. Hunt, 151.
360. Hunt, 177.

The Fall of Parthia and the Transformation of the Church of the East

The dynamics of the Mesopotamian world would change greatly as the third century came into being. As already noted, Edessa and northwestern Mesopotamia turned their attention westward toward Rome in the second half of the second century.[361] The replacement of the Parthian Empire with that of the Sassanid in 226 would have its own effect on areas farther east, though it would take about one hundred years to be fully felt.[362] Unlike the Parthians, who cared little about the religious affiliations of their subjects, thus allowing varying streams of the Jewish faith and Christianity to flourish, the Sassanids had a definite religious preference, one that would result in increasing persecution of both Jews and Christians as the third century came to an end.[363] The religion the Sassanids recognized as official was Zoroastrianism.[364] In return for

361. Rawlinson, *Parthia*, 325–330; Moffett, *History of Christianity in Asia*, 57–58; Thomas, "Conversions of Adiabene and Edessa," 21–23.

362. Philip, *East of the Euphrates*, chap. 3; Wigram, *Introduction to the History*, 19, 37.

363. Philip, *East of the Euphrates*, chap. 3; Wigram, *Introduction to the History*, 22. On the whole, followers of the Jewish faith did better than Christians during this time, as noted in the scholar Frank Gavin's comment that the position of the Jews during the third and fourth centuries was "not unfavorable." Frank Gavin, *Aphraates and the Jews: A Study of the Controversial Homilies of the Persian Sage in Their Relation to Jewish Thought* (New York: AMS Press, 1966), 18. A Jewish directive that "the civil law of the government is as valid for the Jews as their own law" allowed them to "bend gracefully beneath the storm of Zoroastrian intolerance in the 'New Persia' of the beginning of the Sassanid dynasty." Gavin, 23–24. Jewish people, however, still suffered occasional slaughter under the Sassanids, as they did by the thousands when many attempted to return to Jerusalem during the reign of the Roman emperor Julian (361–363 CE). Gavin, 9–10.

364. Philip, *East of the Euphrates*, chap. 3; Wigram, *Introduction to the History*, 22.

special privileges, the first Sassanid king, Ardashir, used the Zoroastrian priesthood to help legitimate his throne.[365] In his line of thinking, state and religion existed to reinforce one another.[366]

The Roman Empire's recognition of Christianity as its official state religion in the early fourth century certainly didn't help matters.[367] Christians were then seen not only as not supporting the official Sassanid faith but also as supporting that empire's main enemy, even as the two empires continued to war against one another.[368] That the Sassanids had reason to worry is perhaps not without cause. The Persian writer Aphrahat's fifth *Demonstration*, "On Wars," written in the early fourth century, makes the claim that Jesus had "handed over the kingdom to the Romans, as the children of Esau are called. And these children of Esau will keep the kingdom for its giver."[369] "He Himself will preserve it," Aphrahat writes elsewhere, ". . . that Kingdom will not be conquered. For a mighty champion Whose name is Jesus shall come with power, and bearing as His armour all the power of the Kingdom."[370]

Lack of support for the Sassanid Empire from Christian believers led then to periods of persecution. Christians were forced to pay double tax.[371] Some Christian clerics became martyrs.[372] On the whole, however, the Christian

365. Philip, *East of the Euphrates*, chap. 3.
366. Philip, chap. 3.
367. Philip, chap. 3; Wigram, *Introduction to the History*, 60.
368. Philip, *East of the Euphrates*, chap. 3; Wigram, *Introduction to the History*, 60.
369. Aphrahat, *Demonstration* 5, "Of Wars," sec. 22, trans. John Gwynn, from *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd Series, vol. 13, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Buffalo, N.Y.: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890), revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/370105.htm.
370. Aphrahat, sec. 24.
371. Philip, *East of the Euphrates*, chap. 3; Wigram, *Introduction to the History*, 63.
372. Philip, *East of the Euphrates*, chap. 3.

and Jewish communities during the first centuries of the Sassanid Empire continued to develop in tandem, with local customs and attempts to avoid persecution likely leading to the continued mixing of traditions, even as authorities within the various Jewish and Christian sects tried to impose their versions of each faith on their adherents. A sixth-century Christian canon from the Church of the East, for example, notes, "We have learned that some Christians, either through ignorance or through imprudence, are going to see people of other religions and taking part in their festivals, that is to say, going to celebrate festivals with Jews, heretics, or pagans, or accepting something sent to them from the festivals of other religions. We thus order, by heavenly authority, that no Christian is allowed to go to the festivals of those who are not Christians."[373] In such a milieu, it makes sense that the early history of the Christian faith in the area was lost, for when Roman Christians, Jewish Christians, and various so-called Gnostic sects all lay claim to being the faith originally delivered, each would have reason to tie early teachers to themselves and to deny claims that might interfere with such assertions. Although Christianity in the East would remain distinctive in its ascetic impulses and its continued adherence to Jewish customs for a much longer period of time than in the West, the Roman church's eventual domination, combined with rabbinical Judaism's eventual victory over other Jewish sects and the absence, after 70 CE, of first-generation Jerusalem-centered Christian authority, would determine much of what remained of that early history, including our understanding of what Peter meant when he wrote the church "at Babylon . . . saluteth you."

373. Quoted in Michal Bar-Asher Siegal, "Judaism and Syriac Christianity," chap. 9 in King, *Syriac World*, 149–150.

Conclusion

As the anti-Jewish messages of fourth-century Antiochene bishop John Chrysostom, mentioned in the first chapter, and the 1599 Synod of Diamper in India, mentioned in the second, suggest, the shift of Christianity away from its Jewish origins and the standardization of various theological doctrines and liturgical practices led to a concomitant defining of what "Christianity" meant such that some who in the first century would have been called Christian were no longer considered of the sort. When Roman Catholic missionaries showed up in Mongolia and China in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, they found a large community of what they perceived as heretics—Nestorian Christians who had been anathematized from the church back in the fifth century over arguments regarding the emphasis the church should place on Jesus's humanity versus his divinity, arguments for which Nestorians were accused of believing in a "two-headed" Jesus or of a human Jesus who had been adopted by God for his good behavior, neither of which were wholly accurate.[1] The center for the Nestorian understanding of Jesus, after Nestorius's death, came to be Antioch, and the church of the East continued in that tradition, even after much of the church in Antioch itself would concede its views to those of Rome.[2] Although no doubt, by the thirteenth century, Nestorian practices

1. Samuel Hugh Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia*, vol. 1: *Beginnings to 1500* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1992), 175–178.
2. Moffett, 178, 186.

had changed much from that of the church in the first and second centuries, so too had those of the church in the West. The Roman Catholic missionary William of Rubruck, on reaching churches in the Mongol Empire in thirteenth century lamented that the Nestorians "rebaptized Christians from other communions, ate meat on Fridays, did not practice confession, and recited the offices in Syriac."[3] But similarly, Nestorian Christians were "unhappy at the arrival of Roman Catholics whom they feared not only as rivals but as schismatics."[4] Such differing views regarding what even counts as Christianity, imposed by later adherents who had added and subtracted much from the doctrines of the first apostles, have colored our perception of first- and second-century Christianity, limiting our understanding of its scope and spread.

The popularization of Islam in the East also contributed to the death of such understanding. Governments in the Muslim Empire that emerged after the spread of the religion in the 600s discouraged continued Christian practice, often in the form of lesser rights afforded to Christians and less often in the form of violent pogroms, and helped to weaken Christianity's attractiveness. While the West had its Constantine and string of Christian emperors thereafter, the East had its caliphs; one imposed its particular version of Christianity on the bulk of its populace, the other its versions of Islam.

The transformation of Christianity from its Jewish origins into something outside those familiar grounds likely began in earnest with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish temple. Such contributed to the two faiths setting up separate camps, one based around increasingly stringent Jewish rabbinical traditions that clearly defined which persons constituted Jews and which did not, limit-

3. Moffett, 411.
4. Moffett, 457.

ing their interaction; the other around adherence to a belief in promulgation of the Jewish scriptures to all peoples through fulfillment of prophecies contained therein about a particular person, the nature of the Jewish God and the God of all humankind, and the purpose and proper conduct of human life. In the West, this separation came to mean also distancing one's self from Jewish practices in an attempt to avoid the persecution of local Roman authorities brought on by the revolts of the Jewish people.[5] In the East, however, no concomitant motivation existed. What separation occurred was primarily the result of rabbinical authorities themselves attempting to suppress other sects that had once held sway throughout parts of the Jewish world.[6] By defining who could participate in the synagogues, what was to be taught in Jewish schools, what constituted acceptable forms of worship, how laws were to be adjudicated, and eventually who could contribute to commercial and social enterprises within the Jewish community, those who fell in line with the rabbinical Judaism that emerged sidelined their less politically inclined Jewish Christian cousins, eventually pushing them out of the synagogues.[7] Such division, in turn, promoted an increasingly non-Jewish-oriented faith, as believers more frequently mixed among the non-Jewish cultures around them, even deriving from them, and indeed eventually to the propagation of a wide array of Christianities and the spread of differing historical traditions, all claiming to be rooted in "the faith once delivered" (Jude 3).

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5. Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity* (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1977), 182–183.

6. Philip S. Alexander, "Jewish Believers in Early Rabbinic Literature (2d to 5th Centuries)," chapter 21 in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, ed. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 671.

7. Alexander, 671, 676, 686.

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